

“O, Give Me A Home”

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O, Give Me a Home

by James W. Boyd

Preface

This book is entitled, “O, Give Me A Home,” taken from a phrase in one of my Dad’s favorite songs, “Home on the Range.” The home I have in mind is not the one of which cowboys sang, “where the buffalo roam and the deer and antelope play,” but a home here on earth; the kind and quality that God has revealed the home should be.

My parents told me that when I was under six I sang “Home on the Range” in a program from the stage. I described it as the place where the “deer and the *cantaloupe* play.

God has revealed to us the home as a divinely appointed institution just as is the church, originating in the mind of God. This home is to be of certain quality and God has graciously informed us what He expects. It is quite obvious that the home was given to mankind for happiness and an opportunity to be what God wants us to be.

The lessons included, with few exceptions, were first published in my publication, *A Burning Fire*, a periodical of over two hundred issues which contained nearly a thousand full manuscripts of the sermons I have preached over nearly forty-seven years of preaching. Nearly all of the lessons in this book have been preached by me many times over. I have now gathered them into one volume.

Because of the subject material there can be expected some repetition inasmuch as the subjects touch inseparably one to the other. These subjects include studies about the home, marriage, parents, children, sources and solutions to problems, authority in the home, divorce, remarriage, the relationship of the home and the church, and a wide range of related subjects.

I do not claim or pretend any expertise in these matters, but I am confident that the convictions expressed are founded on truth, and while they are not necessarily original with me they are my own convictions regardless of the source from which I learned them.

I owe so much to so many. I have learned and been shown what the home should be by my own parents, from the influence of my wife’s parents, in my own home, and from observation of many homes. The truth that “by their fruits” surely has proven to be a source of confirmation for me of what is contained in this book. In addition to experience, the ultimate foundation of it all is the Word of God, the precepts and principles of Scripture

I have produced this book as a tribute to my Mother and Dad, both now departed from this life. Dad died suddenly at the age of almost sixty-eight. I was but thirty-three at the time. A more severe blow had never befallen me up to that time. Mother died at the age of ninety-five. Together they reared my older brother and younger sister and me, providing for us physically as best they could during difficult times. But the spiritual

provision they gave us is that which I have come to appreciate the most. I was not as fully aware of what a great blessing they were to me during my younger years as I am now able to understand, having children and grandchildren of my own. I know our home was not perfect because we were not perfect and are not yet perfect. But only God knows the depth of my love for them and how I honor them yet. This composition is presented as a small measure of my gratitude for the home of my upbringing, the home of my marriage, with a view to the ultimate home of the soul.

May it be that some sentiment expressed herein will contribute in some way to assisting others to know the joy of home.

A Great Woman

Second Kings, chapter four, tells us of a woman who is called "great." "*And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman*" (Second Kings 4:8). The name of this woman is unknown, being only identified by the area where she lived, the Shunamite woman. Just what all might be included in the term "great" we cannot precisely know. It may well refer to her prominence in that area. As we read about her there are at least four qualities revealed that would qualify her to be called great that are not always considered qualities of greatness by much of the world. As we consider them we need to compare ourselves to her and probably we shall discover areas where we could make real improvement

A Servant

This woman lived to do good for others. One who lives to serve others is obviously an unselfish person who really cares for the welfare of others. In this case we see Elisha, God's prophet, as he passed through the city as he often did. He would be dependent on the people of the area where he was for his livelihood, food, shelter, and other necessities. At this particular time in Israel's history the prophets of God were not among the most wanted and popular people. The nation was demoralized by worship of Baal and wicked living. God's prophets, expressing God's rebuke for such things, meant that few people really cared for them or even wanted them around. Fewer still would risk showing kindness and consideration.

This woman recognized Elisha as a "*holy man of God*" (Verse 9). As he came through the village, she "*constrained him to eat bread,*" offering hospitality and provisions and rest for the weary servant of God. She used her material goods for another, bestowing kindness on one who was deserving. She showed her love and respect for God by "holding up the hands" of the prophet of God by assisting him.

It was her suggestion that she and her husband, who obviously shared her concerns, build a special room and furnish it so that it could be used by the prophet whenever he was passing by. This is thoughtfulness and consideration being manifested. She was like an Old Testament Dorcas who was busy doing good things for other people. Surely such people are "great" in the eyes of the Lord because Jesus said that those who served would be the greatest (Matthew 20:26). Doing unto those that love God is like doing unto God (Matthew 25:40).

Contented

She could be considered "great" because she was contented with her lot in life. As might be expected, Elisha, upon receiving this support, wanted to show favors in return. He sent a message by his servant Gehazi, "*Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care, what is to be done for thee? Wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?*" Elisha was in a position to return the favor and inquired what

it was that he might do for her?

Her response tells something of her character. "*I dwell among mine own people.*" In other words, she was content as she was. She had not done these things for Elisha in order to receive some benefit for herself. Like the psalmist, she felt that her "*cup runneth over.*" She had no ambitions and sought no glory, fame or reward for her service. How different she was from so many today who are never content with the good that they can do, but always seek something more, better, grander for themselves. They never really consider that they have a duty and an obligation to give themselves on behalf of others but only seek what they want.

We do not suggest that she was in a state of stagnation with no desires whatever. She earnestly wanted a child, but she had her husband's love, her home, her chance to do good. She did not complain and murmur about sacrificing. The prophet made her heart glad when he informed her that God would be gracious to her and her husband and bless that home with a son. In time a son was born, and through that son we are able to see some other sterling qualities in the life and character of the Shunnamite.

Strength and Control

This woman knew how to stand strong in the storm. She exercised self-control and faith in God; virtues that go hand-in-hand. This son grew to some size and was in the field with the father but became sick. He was taken to his mother where her love and skill did all that could be done for him. Nonetheless, the son died; so tragedy had invaded that home.

This great lady demonstrated control and faith in her hour of grief. She laid the son's body aside, and without any indication of self-pity, resentment, bitterness or rashness, she displayed sober and mature action. She sent for her husband and requested transportation quickly to Mt. Carmel, the home of the prophet Elisha. Her husband thought it strange, seeing it was not a regular time of worship, such as the new moon or the Sabbath day. This brief remark indicates that it was the custom of this woman to be a worshipper of God and a faithful attendant to worship duties. Her response to her husband was, "*It shall be well.*" There was need for haste and not delay. She assured her husband that everything was going to be all right. She had that kind of faith, and evidently she had so conducted herself before him that he had full faith and confidence in her because he asked no further questions, respecting her proven judgment and knowing her to be worthy of trust.

This "*great*" woman had attained two goals that every man and woman ought seek. She wanted to be acceptable before God, and she had the love, confidence and respect of her mate. She had learned through living to strive for things that really matter rather than the frivolous, trite, paltry decorations of a secular and materialistic world.

Action and Submission

Another quality seen in her was that she was a person of energetic action, as well as submission to God. As she approached Mt. Carmel she met Gehazi, Elisha's servant, who asked, "*Is it well with thee, thy husband and thy child?*" Her answer was "*It is well.*" Even though she was in sorrow, grief, and on a mission of concern for her child, she was submissive to what she could not change, but active in changing whatever could

be changed. She offered no complaints, no whining, no distrust, no grumbling of her misfortune, no wringing of the hands in panic, but a calm and serene dignity in the face of the worst storm of her life.

We might focus attention in passing on Gehazi's question, "*Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child?*" (Second Kings 4:26). This is a question every wife and mother ought to consider. Many women are so concerned about being "liberated" and "becoming a free and independent person" that they have either neglected or altogether abandoned their sacred responsibilities to their husband, child, and home. Our society has become so "career conscious" for women that the primary purpose for woman's existence has been shoved into the background if not out of the picture completely. Women have become more sinful, secular, self-seeking, and misguided and it is evident that many will continue in this perverted pathway because they have been fed the garbage of Satan that says, "You've come a long way, baby." They sure have. For many, they have taken no notice of the way they have gone. Respect for women is often less because more women are less respectable. They have acted like barbarians rather than women as God would have them. This "*great*" woman from Shunem was one who was concerned for her family first.

Elisha's Help

When she met Elisha she told him what had taken place and urged him to come and do whatever he could. Possibly she sought nothing more than the presence of a friend and man of God at the time of distress. She also knew him to be a man of miracles. Nothing would suffice except Elisha return home with her.

Elisha arose, went to the house, found the child, and called upon God to raise the child. The child's life was restored and he was given to his mother. Seeing the child alive again, she bowed herself to the ground with submissive thanksgiving for what had been done (verse 37).

This "*great*" woman was a person of strong faith, a steady disposition, fervent piety, one that worshipped God, who was a keeper of the home, self-reliant, trustworthy, grateful, wise, kind and considerate. What else could describe her but "*great*?"

Her grave is unmarked and her name is unknown, but her life still shines in brilliance down through the ages, and benefits even us.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why was this woman rightly called "*great*"?
2. What evidence is there that she enjoyed her husband's confidence?
3. What do you consider to be the most outstanding quality she demonstrated?

A Real Man

“Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged his son Solomon saying, I go the way of all the earth; be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself; that the Lord may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee [said he] a man on the throne of Israel” (First Kings 2 1-4).

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (First Corinthians 16:13).

In the first passage David is giving his death-bed charge to his son Solomon who was to succeed him as the next king of Israel. He told him to show himself a man and told him what that involved. It meant doing God’s will, being obedient to God’s word, living as God would have him live. That was real manhood.

In the second passage, Paul was instructing Christians in Corinth how to be faithful disciples. Among the instructions he gave was, *“quit you like men.”* The word *“quit”* meant to “behave or conduct themselves” as a real man would, not as an immature child, but a man. Every age has its desperate need for real man. And we use the term “man” to mean both men and women of certain kind and quality, but mostly males who are real men. We make a distinction between just being a male and being a real man. Jeremiah 5:1 reveals God’s charge to the prophet, *“Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem and see now and know and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh truth, and I will pardon it.”* Jeremiah could find any number of males. But the instructions implies he would have difficulty finding a real man, the kind and quality described.

Who is a Real Man?

Just what is a real man? Real manhood is not measured in physical power or prowess. It means more than being physically strong with big biceps, tall, broad shoulders, etc. The strongest man of the Bible was Samson, but he was a moral degenerate, weak in self-discipline, void of godly character. Goliath, the giant of the Philistines, was a physical giant, but one of the idolaters that fell before the young boy’s sling. It takes more than physical bravery, athletic achievement, muscles, etc. to be classified as a real man in the sight of God.

It is more than mental power, quickness of mind and wit. Solomon was the wisest to have ever lived except the Christ. Yet he failed to heed the very directions his father David gave him. He lived an indulgent life of luxury, gradually turning to idolatry. He lived his life through in much wantonness, only to come to the ultimate conclusion that all that kind of life was vanity and vexation of spirit. There are many “wise men” of our

time, scholars, geniuses in some respects, that show themselves to be fools because they even deny the reality of God. They are not real men.

Maturity

Paul shows that real manhood is manifested by maturity in those things that matter. Behavior like a man should go before you call yourself a man. Do not continue to be as a child in conduct and think you are a man. Being a man, you should put away childish things and accept the duties, work, and obligations of manhood before you classify yourself as a man. The real man is one who accepts his duty to God and his fellowman, whatever that duty is, and discharges it faithfully and to the best of his ability. Just being a male does not mean you are or shall necessarily ever be a real man in the evaluation of God.

There are many poor excuses for men filling the roles of husbands and fathers today because they either do not know or will not accept their duty to God and man, wife, children, home, church, etc.

Head

What is the duty of a real man? He is to be the head of the home as Christ is head of the church. This is not an arbitrarily assigned duty, but one that has been designated by the Creator of the home, Almighty God. This rules out the “hen-pecked husband.” This outlaws a domineering wife and the weak husband figure. There is no more reason for a woman-governed home than there is for a woman-run church. God decreed that man is to be head of the home. God made Christ the head of the church and God gave man to be head over the family. Variation from this is a variation from God’s design.

Attempts on the part of women to take over the home, assuming that they have husbands, is to show disrespect for the law of God. The failure to assume the duty over the home by the husband is another show of disrespect for the law of God. Regardless of what the fanatical “women’s rights” perversity would have us believe, this is God’s will. Departure from this is already showing its deadly results in our society and all the rabble-rousing rubbish from whatever source cannot and will not prove otherwise. People are fools to listen to and give heed to those who show such little concern for God.

Decisive

There are decisions in the home that the husband ought be man enough to make, not leaving them to the wife to have to make when many times she prefers not to have to make them. Many wives have to make decisions they ought never be called upon to make because their husbands shirk the duty that is theirs. A wife has a right to a husband that will lead the family aright. Everyone in the family ought to be able to lean on him for support and direction. Some families are like the story where the wife makes all the little decisions and the husband makes the big ones. He decides whether America should declare war on an enemy, when to send up the next space flight, what to do about the nation’s economy, all the big decisions; she decides where they will live, what will be his occupation, where to go to church, how to spend the money, what to do about the children, etc.

Lead

Notice, we said the husband ought to lead. We did not say and would not contend that the husband is to drive his wife and family. Attempting to be a dictator and tyrant is not manly. A leader is always considerate of those he leads, sensitive to their needs and what is in their best interest before himself. What would you think of a man's head that was indifferent to the welfare of the rest of his body? You would rightly consider him "nuts." That is a good description of a man who runs his family without proper love, compassion, consideration and interest for those he leads. There is nothing manly about an abusive brute who throws around his authority, running roughshod over others. Only when he is a real leader is he a real man.

Provide

He has the duty to provide for the family as best he can. God gave man this duty, to earn bread by the sweat of his brow. Unless there are reasons why he cannot provide for his family it is unmanly for him to allow others to provide for him and his. The wife is to be the "*keeper of the home*" the "*help*" that is suitable to him. She is not to ordinarily be expected to be the provider, unless there be extenuating circumstances that would demand her assistance. Too many men have allowed their wives to go to work outside the home and the home and the children have been neglected for the sake of more and more money and the things money can buy. You may not have as much, but what you can have will be worth far more than to have all that this world offers and lose the precious souls of your children through your neglect, lack of attention, failure to supervise and guide. This idea that a woman ought work outside the home has harassed the home, marriage, society, etc until America is suffering beyond measure, young and old. Young people need to think about that.

Some men are just lazy and willing to let the wife work herself to an early grave while he loaf, plays, does as little as possible. Yes, in emergencies, she should help if she can, provided the better things are not sacrificed. But we see too many "planned" emergencies that are nothing but manifestations of covetousness and greed. If a man does not provide for his own, he is worse than an infidel (First Timothy 5:8). Such spineless males can hardly be called men.

Advice to young men and young women is in order. Boys, do not marry until you are willing and can carry the load. Girls, do not marry if you are unwilling to be a homemaker which is your primary work. You have no right to violate God's will by bringing children into a home that is turned upside down through love of money. Learn to do your duty, both the husband and wife. That is God's way.

Example

A real man is a good example to follow. Some think a real man is the kind that drinks beer, whiskey, etc. We see it advertised all the time. Some big “hero” guzzling down his “booze” as if he was a real man, getting his “gusto.” What a distorted picture! He is a glutton and a wine-bibber, not a real man. His evil appetite is showing his sons and daughters just what a person is not supposed to be, and he is deceived in thinking that is manhood. How many children grow up literally afraid of the presence of their father because he is a servant to the devil’s brew.

A real man is an example of honesty, clean living, clean speech, obedience to the laws, respect for authority, truthfulness. Real men do not brag how they outwitted the policeman, or cheated on a business deal. Fathers with sons in jail wonder why they ever turned out that way. Many of them can just look at the example they gave them and know why. When their mouth is stuffed with tobacco, chewing and smoking, cursing and swearing, what can you expect from that son or daughter who loves father, but he has taught them to be servants of Satan like he is.

Real men will be concerned for the home and everyone in it. They will make time to be with their children and see to it that they are growing in the right direction. So many parents really do not know their children because they spend so few hours with them during the time of their upbringing. They are strangers to their children.

Real men are examples of morality, responsibility, work, and purity. Real men do not commit adultery. Real men do not forsake their families. Real men show the dignity and honor of labor to their family. Whether one is single or married, a father or not, a real man holds these things high on his list of that which is deserving of esteem.

Spiritual Guide

Please get the next point. No man is a real man who is not responsible for the spiritual welfare of those of his family, including his wife and every child. The admonition to train the child, and bring the child up in the ways of God are assigned to fathers (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4). This is a duty that cannot be shifted to another. Others may help, and others may have to do it because the father fails to do it, but fathers are not real men who think all they have to do is provide food, shelter, clothing, money, etc., and forsakes the duty of spiritual guidance and instruction. Some may think it manly to be crude, gruff, coarse, worldly, irreligious, indifferent to the Lord. They may think that “church and Sunday school” are for women and children and not “real men.” But they have it backward regarding what is a real man. A real man is Christlike, walking daily in the ways of the Lord, living obediently to His every command. This takes courage, honor, conviction, loyalty, and sacrifice. But to be a real man demands it. Being the family’s religious leader is a sign of strength, not weakness. The failure in this realm is weakness, not strength. The big beer-drinking, cursing, muscular, godless brute is a dwarf and a pigmy in comparison to that person who lives nobly, honestly, truthfully, with dignity and love for God and man, doing his daily duty in fearing God and keeping His commandments. He may be small, physically inferior, financially less blessed, and all else that the world considers so important. But when one does what God wants him to do, he is a real man.

There is a story about a man who took his hog to the state fair and won first prize.

But beside the pen was a boy, smoking, stunted in growth, given to profanity, a poor specimen of what a lad ought to be. It was the son of the hog's owner. He had given more attention to the hog than his son.

Dear friend, nobody has the right to claim to be a real man until the souls of his wife and children are first and foremost in his concern. Until you do your duty before God, regardless of whatever measure you may use to test your manhood, you are not there until God approves of you. We all do well to hear and heed David's words to Solomon, "*Show thyself a man.*" Listen to Paul, "*Quit ye like men.*" By being a faithful Christian, leading the home, providing as best you can, being a good example, showing those in your charge the way to heaven, that is real manhood.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who is a real man in the sight of God?
2. How does the world mistakenly determine who is a man?
3. What are some of the qualities of a real man presented in this lesson?
4. Of all these qualities, all of which are necessary, which would you classify as the most important?

Concerning Marriage

Ignorance was never approved by the Savior, therefore, He came teaching to dispel darkness with the light of truth. We must concern ourselves with truth as Jesus taught recorded in the text of Mark 10:1-12.

“And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts Judea by the further side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and he, as he was wont, he taught them again. And the Pharisees came to him and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.”

Trap Questions

Jesus was constantly being asked questions, and as often as not, the questions were designed to trap Him in His words. The question asked Him on this occasion was a good question, but the motive was impure. People often ask questions today, not to learn or gain information, but for various sinister reasons. But let us study the question and the Lord's answer with a heart depleted of prejudice and try to learn what is the will of God in this matter of marriage.

To get a clearer picture of the question, consult Matthew 19:3. The answer Jesus gives whether one could divorce or not was obviously a negative one, and He showed it was not God's will that such take place. While today divorces are granted for almost any reason, even for no reason, this is contrary to the will, intent, and design of marriage as given by the Lord.

Jesus refers to the Mosaic Law under which His questioners lived. What the law taught was what they should obey. God's Word ought be allowed to be the final chapter on any subject. The Pharisees responded that Moses allowed divorce. Actually what Moses insisted was that there be a writing of divorcement if a divorce occurs. Moses did not command divorce, but he “*suffered*” or allowed it, and Jesus said it was because the people were so hardened of heart that Moses did it. But it was not true that Moses allowed divorce for just any cause. The morality of the people was so low and rebellious that it was permitted, but never approved. There are things that God has permitted but not approved. This is one instance of that. God will even allow sin, but who would dare say

that God approves of sin in any form?

Regardless of what Moses allowed, Jesus referred to God's original plan for marriage as the standard to follow. "*From the beginning it hath not been so.*" God never intended that married people divorce. "*What God hath joined together let not man put asunder.*" The will of God for marriage is that one leave father and mother and cleave to his or her mate until death separate them. How can there be any question in anyone's mind as to the permanency intended by God in the establishment of marriage? This idea that one is allowed to divorce just so long as they never remarry and God is not offended is as foreign to the truth on the subject as right is foreign to what is wrong.

Marriage is More

Marriage is more than just a social contract designed to propagate the earth and perpetuate the race. It is more than a civil contract entered according to the laws of the state, although these laws must be obeyed. It is not just a convenient economic arrangement. It is a sacred and divine contract, a relationship planned in heaven for mankind. It is ordained of God and should be entered, conducted and terminated only according to the will of Him who gave it. Herein is the fault of many who marry; namely, they fail to include God in their marriage. Marriage involves more than a man and a woman. It must include God who gave it.

The nature and purpose of marriage is for the happiness and welfare of mankind. It is not good for man to be alone. The marriage vow is a vow of perpetual and indissoluble friendship which no fortune or alteration of external circumstances should be allowed to interrupt or weaken. In marriage there is no longer just separate interests, but two become united as one. Often the cause of unhappiness in marriage is due to the dissimilarity of those involved in such as education, finances, religion, race, social status and other factors. These differences often place unbearable and unnecessary strains on the marriage bonds and they ought to be avoided before marriage occurs. Religious division is a burden far heavier than many marriages can bear. Nearly every religious advisor I have ever known or of whom I have heard plead with people to be sure the religion of the man and the woman is the same. Why does this have to be constantly brought to the attention of Christians who ought to recognize this from the start?

You and I Become We

Marriage permits no separate possession but what was once I, my and mine, you and yours, becomes that which belongs to both of us. The two become one flesh. The couple is together in all things. Deviations from this God-given intent invites stress, strain and tensions that ought not be given the right to exist. Such things are avoidable.

Marriage does not always bring perfect happiness to everyone. There are manifold reasons why this is true. Even so, this does not allow the dissolution of marriage. Only the death of one of those involved is the way that a marriage can honorably be terminated. If the record given in Mark was the only inspired information we had concerning this matter, we would have to conclude that death, and only death, ended a marriage in the sight of God. But Matthew 19:9 gives additional teaching that must be respected as we study the will of God in marriage.

One Cause

God allows divorce for one reason and one reason only. That reason is the cause of fornication. It is not mandatory for marriage to be broken even then because there is the possibility of genuine repentance and forgiveness. But God does not demand that a person live as husband or wife with a mate that is not faithful to their sexual vow to keep themselves only to their mate. The vow of marriage is violated by fornication. This teaching is so clear that there ought not be any dispute regarding it. Death is the only honorable way for marriage to end. Fornication will allow a divorce, but that means sin has entered the picture. How far removed from God's will our society has drifted! We are paying a terrible price for man's rebellion.

Have you ever considered the horror of divorce? We read of divorced people more and more, even in the church, and some try so hard to picture it as something beneficial and strain to remove the stigma attached to it. While the shame before mankind of the breakdown of a marriage has been reduced, unfortunately for the guilty and those who suffer divorce, there is no way to ever erase the tragic consequences of it. Divorce has been characterized as tearing a body limb from limb. It is like taking a human body and placing it upon the rack and gradually, painfully, disjuncting it until it rips asunder and leaves the victim destroyed. Just think how Jesus teaches in marriage two become one flesh, but in divorce this one flesh is torn apart.

In Jesus' day, like our own, marriage was not respected as it ought to have been. There was great laxity in meeting marital responsibilities. But the teaching of Jesus restores the standard of marriage as God fixed it from the creation of the world. It reaffirms the permanency of it and the sinfulness of tearing it apart. Woe to the one who is the cause for this tearing! If we love God, we will strive to make our marriage what God intended it to be when He gave it in Eden.

Evil Results

If the institution of marriage, and its sacredness, is not respected in a society we learn from history the inevitable collapse of that society. National greatness cannot continue when the home, the basic unit of society, goes awry. Without respect for God's marriage law the level of morality of the people of the land plummets downward until the degeneracy of the race is overwhelming. Souls are cast into misery, homes fall, despair and hopelessness reign over the hearts and lives of people, children are neglected and the security, training and righteous upbringing are absent. The attendant evils resulting from all of this are apparent to one and all who will honestly consider the havoc and ruin caused by the ever increasing breakdown of the home and the disregard of marriage vows.

The future success of the nation depends upon a nation where righteousness prevails. With the divorce rate climbing year by year, and the population being flooded with those who have shown little to no respect for God's moral teaching and the divine edicts regarding marriage, the very foundation of civilization is threatened and nothing is left to sustain.

One Faith

Homes where there is religious division are very subject to this kind of dissolution. This is not to say that divorce does not occur even in homes where the partners were united religiously. But somewhere along the line one or both abandon the authority of God whenever there is divorce. Religiously divided homes have not the ultimate common ground. They have no final standard by which to measure all matters. There is no common respect for the divine teaching of God. In the very area where people need the support and encouragement of each other the most, it is lacking. The children reared in such divided homes become confused, intimidated, frustrated, not knowing what to believe, and often they strike out into areas where their own destruction, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, is the ultimate result. No home, regardless of how much happiness may exist therein, is as God wants it to be until all who are accountable to God in that home belong to God through Christ. The greatest contribution anyone can make toward the stability of the home and marriage is to be a faithful Christian. When that is the situation the blessings of God will be in evidence and the home will be what God wants for it.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why did some people ask Jesus questions?
2. From what two passages is our lesson taken?
3. What did Moses allow?
4. What was God's intention from the beginning?
5. What kind of covenant or contract is marriage?
6. What is meant by "the two become one flesh?"
7. What is the only cause Scripture allows for divorce?
8. Discuss the harmful effects of divorce on everyone involved.
9. What does history teach us about a society that fails to respect God's marriage laws?
10. What is at the root of so much of the divorce tragedy?

Daniel, The Boy Who Stood Like A Man

The reading of Daniel, chapter one, is essential to this lesson. Please take your Bible and postpone the study until you have read the passage.

The time of the lesson was when Judah was in Babylonian captivity, having been taken there in three stages: one, under Jehoiakim; then Jehoiachin; then Zedekiah. Daniel was among those taken in the first deportation.

He was also among the young men selected for special training by the Babylonians because he possessed the qualities which made him good material. He was without blemish, strong physically, well favored, one who got along well with others, skillful, wise, with better than average knowledge and understanding, the kind of lad who could stand before kings with composure. He was a young man of great promise and potential alongside others who were chosen.

Involved in his training was the change of names. Daniel's name was changed to Belteshazzar (not to be confused with King Belshazzar). Also the training included a certain diet, food and drink that was set before them. They were taught the Chaldean language and ways. It was with regard to their diet where we see the manly characteristics of this young lad come to the surface.

A Forced Choice

Being a Jew, there were certain foods forbidden him lest he defile himself. He was forced to make a choice. If he ate these forbidden foods he would violate God's law. If he did not eat he ran the risk of disfavor of his captors with unknown and uncertain consequences. Let us understand the nature of his alternatives. It was not left to Daniel to decide what was right and wrong. God had already decided that. It was not a question of knowledge with him because he knew the law of God. It was simply a question of whether he would obey God or not.

This is much the same decision confronting people today. God has decided and revealed in His Word right and wrong. Many times people know what God has said. They simply must decide whom to serve. In the comfort and security of our situations we may at first think Daniel's decision should have been an easy one. But consider the pressures upon him. He could reason that he was in a strange land and not there by choice. What else could he do except comply with the wishes of his captors? The king's servants had commanded it. Dare he defy them? He had already been told he would risk himself and others if he disobeyed their directions. Furthermore, who would ever know? It seemed that most everyone else was going along with the command. Why should he be different? He could have considered doing this thing just once in order to relieve a difficult situation with intentions to obey God hereafter. All of these excuses and rationalizations could have been suggested by him. These are the same kind of pressures facing people who consider serving God today.

Sometimes we get the idea that only the young are beset with pressure from their peers and situations. These pressures follow us all the days of our lives. If we do not learn

to handle them while young we will likely be subverted by them somewhere down the line.

His Greatness

Daniel's greatness is seen in verse eight. *"But Daniel purposed in his heart he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank...."* Daniel purposed in his heart he would obey God rather than disobey Him. He made up his mind to do right even in difficult conditions. Here is an example of godly manhood and strength. Regardless of what losses may beset him or others, whatever be the consequences to himself or others, with him it was, *"Thy will be done,"* and he was determined not to waver from it. God was first, last and always in Daniel's decisions. How is it with you and me? Do we have this same disposition?

Yes, he counted the cost, not to see if he would obey God, but only to learn what God expected. Whatever the cost, he would obey God.

We are made to wonder where Daniel learned to take such a righteous stand. We are not specifically told. But we know that he could have learned it only from the will of God. Somebody had taught him and that somebody had done a splendid job of it. We know he could not have learned it by being indulged in sin and folly in his earlier days. He would not have so learned being allowed to "do his own thing" and go his own way. Nor could he have learned to take this stand by following the counsels of this world that teach to conform and get ahead at whatever cost to the truth. The Jews were taught to teach their young and somebody did what they were supposed to have done with Daniel. How we sin against our children to fail to give them the same kind of stalwart and unmovable strength of righteousness.

God is Mindful

Let us not take lightly the statements of verses nine, seventeen, nineteen and twenty where God promised blessings and provisions to those who obeyed Him. Where do people get the idea that God is not aware of His own and that He fails to provide for them? When people do right, God knows it. When they decide the righteous path, God supports them in it. We see it in the life of Daniel. We see it in the promises of Christ (Matthew 6:33), and we have even seen it in our own lives. When Daniel made the decision first to follow the will of the Lord, then God acted on his behalf. Provisions were made to enable Daniel to remain faithful. But notice, he had to make his decision first. Then came the blessings of God.

Lessons to Learn

There are certain lessons we must draw from this account. It is always right to do right and always wrong to do wrong. It is never right to do wrong and never wrong to do right. Ultimately, we never lose anything of lasting value when we do right and stand up on the side of God's truth. Regardless of what it costs us, we are always more blessings than the losses we suffer.

We learn that God will provide for those who stand up for His way. It is never to our advantage to yield to temptations and pressures to do wrong. Regardless of the

consequences, right-doing is better than wrong-doing. In our day of liberalism, modernism, various "isms" within and without the family of God, the theories of evolution, humanism, immorality, mass confusion, attacks on the Bible, digression in the church, the raging of the heathen on every hand, we must learn to stand. We must develop the same spiritual backbone that Daniel possessed and displayed. God has not promised ease and comfort in service to Him. What He has promised is expressed with the following poem.

God has not promised skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through,
God hath not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.
God hath not promised we shall not know
Toil and temptation, trouble and woe.
He hath not told us we shall not bear
Many a burden; many a care.
But God hath promised strength for the day,
Rest for the laborer, light for the way,
Grace for the trials, help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, and undying love.

How wonderful for each of us if we would develop the same noble virtue exhibited by Daniel on this occasion. Would we not be better servants of the God of heaven?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why was Daniel in such precarious conditions?
2. What challenges did he face?
3. What resolution did he make?
4. How did this affect others?
5. How did God bless him?
6. How else could he have responded to the challenges?

Father's Duty to the Family

We begin with a definition of terms. Duty refers to an obligation, something that not only ought to be done, but is not optional. It is something bound upon a person. A family in this discussion is one that includes the basic unit of father, mother, child or children. Families may be different from this with extended families, one-parent families, and various arrangements that are morally acceptable. Some families are without a father or mother due to death or divorce. Some families do not include children. Arrangements of kin in the same house are also prominent. Many of us have known two aunts living together, a father and daughter at the same house, etc. We always speak of moral associations.

Even with a father there may be exceptional families because the father is ill, or unable to discharge his duties for other reasons. But we generally consider the father as the man of the house, with the role of husband and parent of the children. Other members of the family may well share his work in some respects, but there are certain responsibilities that are his that cannot be shifted to someone else. This is that upon which we shall focus our attention.

Responsibility to God

The father must accept his personal duty to God (Romans 14:12: Ecclesiastes 12:13). This will determine his duties to others and how he is to meet other obligations. He cannot fulfill his duty if he leaves God out because God is the originator and designer of the home, having brought it into existence with purpose.

Duty to God means he has a duty to family because God requires that of him. It seems that many do not understand they have a duty to family at all. Many families have no father figure for the children. Either through abandonment, neglect, abuse, failure to support, or just shirking of duty, many fathers have been sorely lacking. First Timothy 5:8, *"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."*

God's Word teaches the father has a duty, what that duty is, and how serious a matter it is. The Bible is the best handbook on fatherhood that has been written.

Responsibility Begins Early

A man's responsibility to his family begins before he even has a family. How we need to teach our young men this vital truth. He is to keep himself morally pure, develop his character, learn to work, and to never be abusive toward members of his family whether they are younger, older, or whatever the relationship. He must not abuse his body with drugs lest the consequences be a detriment to his yet unborn children. He needs to learn what true love is. In other words, he must learn what his duties are before he undertakes the discharge of them.

He does this best when he makes himself a man of faith, integrity, conviction, and honor rather than simply seeking wealth, power, fame, and pleasure. Being a father is not

a boy's job. It takes a real man. Too many males in our land are not real men when it comes to facing responsibilities.

Duty Assumed With Marriage

The family originally consists of two people. He is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23). This is God's order, so we ought not complain against it. Being the head means he must develop and demonstrate love, sacrifice, loyalty, and faithfulness. It is impossible to discharge his duty to his family if he is unfaithful to his wife. He cannot and will not be a good father if the vows of marriage are violated.

His role is that of leadership which demands acceptance of responsibility. In other words, "the buck stops here" with him. This is not a matter of superiority or inferiority. A John Deere tractor does one work and a Timex watch does another. These items serve different roles. So it is with husband and wife. Every efficient unit must have a leader and the wisdom of God is that the husband is the leader. We are sorry this does not satisfy the God-hating feminist movement in our twisted society. Much of the world rejects this order, but it is still right because it pleases God, and it pleases those who love God. And please take a candid look at what the displacement of roles has done to our children and society generally! What sane person can defend it?

Provision

First Timothy 5:8 has already been quoted. The provision the father is to provide includes food, shelter, clothing, medicine, and protection. He must see that the home gives every occupant security, that the home is a haven and a harbor of refuge. He does this by hard work. Circumstances such as illness, losses, emergencies, etc. may require assistance at times, possibly on a permanent basis. But these are exceptions. The greatest provision a father can give his children is their mother's time. Mothers ought be quick to give that time.

The father has the prime duty to provide spiritual training (Ephesians 4:6: Proverbs 22:6). Possibly in this realm is most of the dereliction of duty seen among fathers. But fathers are to provide guidance, instruction, advice, counsel, discipline, an example in habits, speech, industry, self-control, attitudes, treatment of others in and out of the family. He is to exercise authority, set priorities, determine values, rules, and standards by which the family is to be regulated. The wife and children are necessarily involved, but he is the one God expects to see that the right things are provided.

This does not mean he can rule as a tyrant. He must not have the "I-am-the-boss" attitude. He is no dictator. He encourages input from the family, is unselfish, sacrificial, behaves with consideration and cooperation with the others. He must be both tender and firm, kind but determined, considerate and strong. He is the captain of the ship and God looks to him for the welfare of the family. Every member of the family ought to help him in every way to fulfill his God-given assignment. They must avoid mutiny and usurpation of authority. They are to lovingly give obedience, respect, and cooperation.

Consequences of Failure

The study of Eli, Samuel, Lot, and David in connection with Absalom are graphic demonstrations of fathers who did not assume and discharge the proper role toward their children. The pain, grief, sorrow, and even death that these families suffered can be traced directly to parental failure to serve as proper fathers.

Let it be said of us as was said of Abraham, Genesis 18:19, *“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”*

Practical Applications

Let us now discover some practical matters that define the duty of fathers physically and spiritually. How long has it been since:

- (1) You led the family in prayer, even giving thanks to God at mealtime?
- (2) When did you last pray for each member of the family, and that you might fulfill your duty to them?
- (3) When did you last study your Bible, told your children some Bible story, provided them with evidence of God, His character, both His goodness and severity?
- (4) Have you given up your “free time” for them lately? Great opportunities arise to guide while walking, swinging, playing in the sand box or playground, or taking special interest in activities special to them.
- (5) How long since you took the entire family on some outing like a picnic, games, building memories, creating a sense of belonging and emotional security? Such outings need not be expensive nor elaborate, but should always be pleasant to recall and discuss.
- (6) Do you show concern for their education, books, teachers, grades, and what is being implanted in their minds by others?
- (7) Compliments support achievement, build genuine self-esteem and self-respect. Do you help build ambition and show their efforts are appreciated?
- (8) Have you recently shown appreciation by word, gift, reward, or treat?
- (9) Do you teach respect for parents by showing respect for your parents? They will learn to honor father and mother by what they see.
- (10) Do you ask for their input into decisions that affect the family, such as vacations, recreations, purchases, schedules, even their rooms? Yes, it may test your metal at times, but it pays dividends in the long run.
- (11) Does your family attend worship together, and all the services?
- (12) When did you say “no” to them because it was for their welfare? Some activities, clothes, appearances, recreations, movies, programs, associations are not best for them. It is your job to discern.
- (13) Have you tried using the world events to show the difference between right and wrong, showing the sinfulness of abortion, but respect for life? Do they know the rules on sexual purity, respect for property, the dignity of work, the demand for justice, concern for the needy, and the seriousness of morality generally?
- (14) When you make decisions, do you try to explain your decisions and actions to them, being considerate of their feelings? Let them know you have the duty to be in

charge, but they need to know how and why you have decided as you have. This is great teaching. Our young must make decisions, and make them for themselves. But it is the parent's duty to give them the basis on which to make decisions. Do you provide that?

(15) How long has it been since you gave them assurance of your love, protection, and confidence, both by word and deed?

(16) Have you taught them how to select friends, to treat others, to set values and priorities? Do your older children receive instruction on how to select a mate?

(17) You should show concern for school lessons. But what of Bible lessons and church related activities?

(18) Are you concerned about what they are doing, their interests, where they are going, what they like and dislike, what they read, see, watch, with whom they associate?

(19) How long has it been since your children saw you take special interest in the place where you live, and your attentiveness to home duties such as the yard, car, windows, dishes, even vacuum cleaners?

(20) Do you show courtesy to your wife, their mother? Let them know you love their mother. This is one of the greatest gifts a father can give his children.

(21) Do you exercise proper discipline when called for? Or is this left to someone else?

(22) Have you considered their future, in education, vocation, profession, and faith?

(23) Do you make special effort to teach them respect for the church? We live in a day of "church bashing." Shall your children be taught otherwise?

(24) Most important of all, are you teaching them respect for all things pertaining to the authority of God, including His reality, their accountability to Him, and the blessing of fellowship with Him?

More Could Be Said

We could possibly ask more such questions, but we are persuaded, "It takes a heap o' living to make a home," as stated by Edgar A. Guest. It surely takes a heap of work and prayer to be the right kind of father.

You cannot lead where you will not go. You cannot teach what you do not know. You, father, are the leader and teacher. Your goal is to do all you can so that every member of your family, without the loss of one, will reach heaven. Help them to serve God and man, and keep the torch of truth burning brightly after your time has ended. The next generation needs children such as your family can produce. In time, you will reap as you have sown. There will be good fruits when you have done your job. You can say, "*My cup runneth over.*"

It is like this: the husband is the master of the house under Christ, the one who manages, oversees, has that special relationship that calls for meeting special obligations. He is the father, founder, producer, the one in charge, with responsibility as the nourisher, upholder, and protector of his family. His first need in doing this is to be a faithful Christian himself.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. To Whom is the Father primarily responsible?
2. When should a young man begin to prepare himself to discharge his duty to his family?
3. What is the man's role in marriage?
4. What are some of his responsibilities to the family?
5. Discuss the practical applications suggested in doing his duty.
6. What reward is mentioned for doing his duty?

Fifth Commandment

Exodus 20:12, “*Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*”

Charity is not the only thing that begins at home, but also thoughtfulness, truthfulness, honesty, uprightness, good citizenship and respect for authority all begin in the home. Lawlessness often begins in the home because there one can learn to disrespect authority as well as learn to respect it. If the world is ever going to be a better place there first must be better homes. The lessons regarding the home from the Word of God must be learned and practiced. So much of the degenerate behavior seen in our world can be attributed to the collapse of the home and its falling away from being what God ordained it should be.

The welfare and salvation of society rests in the family and the reconstruction of family virtues and values, parental authority and responsibility, and the obedience of children to their parents. There is much disrespect toward the older on the part of the younger, and much of this is because of the disrespectful way many who are older have conducted their lives, treated their mates and their children.

The family is the nucleus and spring of society. There can be no spiritually and morally sound nation unless such is characteristic of the home. It is also true that there can be no sound church unless there is soundness in the home because the influence of the home, generally speaking, is greater than that of the church. The home often determines the direction of the church rather than the other way around. The state and the church are both ordained of God, as is the family. The home was instituted in Eden’s purity and sinlessness and is the oldest of God’s institutions. The home heavily influences both state and church, even though influences go both ways.

A God-given Provision

The fifth commandment, learned, believed and obeyed is one of the surest safeguards, and is a near guarantee for correct and righteous human behavior. It gives the blueprint for the reign of law and order. It makes possible a life of peace, security and happiness. It will provide, especially for the young, that solid foundation upon which life can be built and lived as God would have it. When children obey their parents they learn to obey those in charge of schools, government officials, employers, and all others with whom they will have to deal in life. While children obey parents they are doing more than learning the right ways and obeying parents. They are obeying a distinct command and expectation of God. All just authority echoes the voice of God. Our holy obligation as children of God is to obey God. The child’s holy obligation to parents bears the imprint of the God-man relationship.

By Example and Decree

Christ set the example for honoring parents. Luke 2:51, He went down to Nazareth and “*he was subject unto them.*” His first miracle was undertaken at the request of His mother. As He died on the cross He remarked, “*Woman behold thy son,*” and to another (probably John) He said, “*Behold thy mother.*” In this fashion, even as His life was going

from Him, He showed care and concern for His mother and instigated the means for her continued provisions in this life.

This fifth commandment is bound upon the Christian by apostolic authority.

Ephesians 6:1-4, "*Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; [which is the first commandment with promise] that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*" The obligation children have to parents is not a one-way street. Parents have obligations to their children. There is no law of God that says children must obey their parents in doing that which is wicked. Many parents are not respected because they are not respectable. To be honored one must strive to be honorable. Parents must in some measure earn and deserve respect as well as demand it. Parents earn it and children learn it. It is futile to expect children to respect parental authority when the same parents do not have respect for divine authority.

Paul's comment on this commandment was, "*For this is right.*" It will ever be right to honor and obey parental authority. Parents who have served God and their offspring with patience, devotion, sacrifice, self-denial (even of necessities), provided the physical and medical care for their children, prayed for them without ceasing, toiled without intermission, hoped through good times and bad, lavished their children with genuine love akin to the love God has for His children, such parents (and there be many of this quality) are entitled to the highest place of living honor, second only to the honor we offer unto Deity. To fail to obey and honor such parents is to sin against God by defying His commandment.

Dishonorable Parents

Parents who are indeed worthy of honor may reap life's richest rewards, but the unworthy parent who has set a sordid example before his or her young can well expect to reap as they have sown, also. Many "parents" are deserting their own flesh and blood, abusing their own children, even maiming and killing them, casting them off as if they were nothing. Many deprive them of the barest needs because of parental degeneracy like drunkenness, being a "social butterfly" and the seeker of fame and fortune of their own careers, flitting hither and yon, attending to everything their own selfishness demands at the overwhelming cost of leaving the care and upbringing of their children to some other. No less are the sins of the irreligious, profane, worldly, godless and indifferent parents who take no thought for the spiritual welfare of their children, but who may, at the same moment of spiritual neglect, lavish material abundance upon them. What a vast horde of unworthy parents are marching across the scene of history in our time and we are seeing daily the disastrous results of such conduct in the lives of people of every age.

Extension of Honor

What many seemingly have never learned or forgotten is that duty to parents does not end with childhood days at home and under parental supervision. Christ rebuked some adults who dishonored their parents when their parents were dependent on them (Matthew 15:1-9). They were giving to God but neglecting the care and provision of their parents which was also commanded by God. Christ condemned such inconsistency and

accused them of making God's Word null and void and displacing the commandments of God to conform to their own traditions. They committed the mistake of making secondary duty a priority over a primary one.

Providing the necessary care of parents in their old age, when they are sick, when they can no longer provide for themselves, is as much a duty God has given children as for children to obey parents when the children are young. There may not be found some ideal way to provide the special care some parents may need. Being aged and sick is something far less than an ideal existence. None who have ever been involved in providing such care would suggest that it is always easily done. But whatever else may be said on the subject does not displace the duty that children have toward parents, and it should be considered a privilege to care for those who once cared for you. One of life's tragedies is to witness a neglected and ignored father or mother whose life is almost spent, whose children seem to lack even natural affection one would expect. So many children, although adults, are so concerned for only their own ways, their own ambitions and their own selfishness that they neglect parents.

Continuing After Death

Honoring parents need not end with death, but only with the death of the child. Holding parents in honor in precious memory is to continue to honor father and mother. How sweet and reassuring, comforting and strengthening it is to recall the days of youth when the hands of father and mother were tending to our needs and guiding our hearts, showing us by word and deed the way we should go. When parents have crossed Jordan, those who have been so blessed to have had godly parents will come to appreciate more and more what benefits they received from their parents.

Errors Regarding Parents

There are some things that ought not be done that some confuse as giving honor to parents. In some societies there is a strong ancestor worship. Only God is to be worshipped. Civilizations that have engaged in ancestor worship have distorted their relationship to their parents and to God. Placing the will of parents before the will of God is to again get priorities confused. There are some who may never become Christians, children of God, because their parents were not Christians. Some hold the church back in its mission because their parents used to do things differently. To be sure, when our parents followed the truth, and we follow the truth, we walk the same paths, but only because we both are following God. But with the changing of situation and conditions that are inevitable along the way of life, there may be various means of doing the same work that God wants done. We should not be so wedded to such things as once devised by our foreparents that we do not utilize more efficient and productive means of accomplishing the goal. This would be an improper attitude toward parents. At the same time, tried and proven means and methods should not be cast away hurriedly simply for the sake of doing things differently. We dare not fall into the deceptive manner that things new are always best. To have the attitude that some display to always do things differently may reflect we are more concerned with what is new than with what is true.

Neither does this fifth commandment include the adoration of self-appointed ecclesiastical leaders who call themselves "father" and claim a spiritual parenthood over

others. Jesus said, Matthew 23:9, "*Call no man you father on the earth, for one is your Father, even he who is in heaven.*" This does not forbid calling our male parent by the term "father" because the Holy Spirit uses the term in that sense many times in Scripture. This does forbid using the term with reference to a spiritual title or distinction, looking to such as one elevated in rank as if he was the go-between of God and man. Romanism, as well as other religions, has grossly violated this teaching of Christ through the years. The practice is wrong and should be discontinued.

The Best Way

What is the true way to honor parents? To live a godly and decent life before all men as God's child is a crown of everlasting glory to fathers and mothers. The greatest honor a child can bestow upon his parents is to live a consecrated and faithful Christian life. This builds for the parents a monument that shall endure after the passing away of stone.

True honor begins with genuine love for parents. It is manifested even in "little things," like keeping in contact with them, showing interest in their lives, as well as doing those things for them that need to be done. Letters, calls, gifts, remembrances, words, visits, honor of their views and respect for their advice are such things that parents may lawfully claim and expect from their children. Speaking respectfully of them, refraining from abusing them, being conscious of their feelings, trying to make their days bright as possible, all are ways and means of showing the honor to parents which they deserve. Even when one is married and the first loyalty is to his or her mate, there is no cause to dishonor one's parents.

Honoring parents brings blessings to the child as well as the parent. Virtue has its own reward. The serenity of conscience is likened unto the peace that passeth understanding. One who honors his or her parents will most likely rear children who in turn will honor them. The Jews were promised a long existence in Canaan if they honored their parents. Their dishonor of parents and loss of respect for parental and divine authority is what cost them their happiness and continued possession of the land.

Two Failures

There are two types of failures in the parent-child relationship. One is the slackened discipline of children to the point of abandonment. Parental authority has been weakened by poisonous philosophies which say, "Let the child express himself, without discipline, lest you warp his personality." Time has already proven that the most warped personality walking among men is that person who has been spared discipline, never learning self-control, never having been properly taught the difference between right and wrong. Punishment for wrongs committed, restraint wisely and firmly applied, is a blessing to one and all who receive it. It is God's way of teaching respect and cannot and will not be surpassed or equaled by the devices of men, especially those devices created by those who care nothing for the spirit of mankind and the existence of God. Sparing proper discipline has produced an age of license, rape, arson, murder and similar inhumanities one toward the other in our nation which is a shame and disgrace before history and the world at large. Righteousness, restraint and respect for parental and other authorities are acquired traits, not something inherited. They must be taught. What failure has been the sorry lot of many lives on this score!

A second type of failure is the domineering, autocratic, dictatorial parent who fails to properly consider the personal dignity and worth of the life and soul of the child. *“Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath”* has been violated by many, even well-meaning parents. Children are like coiled springs when they are born, pressed down at birth. But they must eventually be released. When they are so pressed during their formative years and not allowed to gradually uncoil under supervision, when the hour comes for them to be released they will fly away in every direction. When the pressure is gradually lifted, however, being carefully managed, the spring will uncoil but stand where it should.

Protector of the Home

The fifth commandment is the guardian of the home. Godless forces are running loose in the world and sowing the seeds of distrust and dishonor as well as defiance and disrespect. A prime order of business for the Christian is to stabilize the sanctity and honor of the laws of God concerning the home. Let the home be treasured, parents honored, disciplined learned, authority accepted and respected! Let intelligent youth join hands and hearts with concerned adults, and together they will be able to slay the dragons of evil that threaten everything that is good, pure and proper before God! Together, through Christ, an overwhelming victory will be won for all!

If the home and family are lost society will degenerate to conditions heretofore believed impossible because of the extent of wickedness. May God grant that home, marriage, parent and child relationships be made to stand in the strength of the Lord!

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Name specific qualities of character that begin at home.
2. What promise accompanied this commandment?
3. How did Jesus demonstrate obedience to this commandment?
4. Are the Ten Commandments part of the old law that has been abolished?
5. Where is this commandment taught in the New Testament?
6. What reason did Paul give for honoring parents?
7. Are all parents deserving of honor?
8. Are we to honor parents only during our youth?
9. How do we honor parents when they are old or dead?
10. Do we worship ancestors when we honor parents?
11. What is harmful about neglect of discipline?
12. What is harmful about a dictatorial parent?
13. How is the fifth commandment a protector of the home?

Find A Man

Jeremiah 5:1, “*Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.*”

Those were the words of Jehovah to His prophet Jeremiah, a prophet to Judah in the years immediately preceding Judah’s fall before Babylon. The people of Judah were God’s chosen people, chosen for the primary purpose that through them God would fulfill His promises to Abraham and bring into the world the Savior of all mankind, Jesus Christ His Son. Yet, the Lord, and Jeremiah, were distressed over the spiritual condition of this nation, and for good reason. These words are a sad commentary on their state. The Lord wanted something, but what He wanted could not easily be found even among His own people.

Note the extent to which Jeremiah was to involve himself in the search for what God wanted: “*Run to and fro through the streets...*,” back and forth, retracing your steps, searching diligently. Go to the broad places, even the market places where many people could be found, looking everywhere. The very nature of the search indicates the scarcity of that which the Lord sought.

Wanted

What was it the Lord wanted? He said, “*Find a man.*” He was not looking for a male human being. Surely, many of them could be located. But He wanted a man of certain qualities of character and spirit. This certain kind of person was one that “*executes judgment,*” or as one translation renders the phrase, “*doing justly.*” Also he was to be one who “*seeks the truth.*”

To execute judgment meant one that dealt fairly with others, measured all things by God’s standard, honest in his word and motive. He was to be what we often refer to as being “above board.” You could depend on what he said and did, discharging his duties with responsibility. His word was his bond.

There is so much dishonesty, cheating, lying, stealing, in almost every realm of human activity. Daily we read of people in government, in business, doing things that are dishonest. One of the tragic ills of mankind is this fundamental fault seen in so many. They simply are not honest people. When any nation reaches the place where honor and integrity are scarce, the nation is in a deplorable spiritual condition.

God also wanted a person who sought the truth. Many of us have never really made a diligent search for what is right and wrong. We deserve no credit for having searched for the truth because we have simply taken what has been handed down to us without investigating what the Word of God teaches. While there is credit due for holding on to truth, how much of an appetite for it do we possess? Do we really hunger and thirst for righteousness? People often shun the truth, ridicule the truth, because they have no real love for truth. I suppose I shall never understand why those who profess to be God’s children have to constantly be urged, begged, and pushed to the opportunities for Bible study. Surely, those who seek the truth and wish to know the will of God do not have to be shoved along.

Scarcity

The story is told of an ancient Greek philosopher named Diogenes who went through the streets of his city in daylight with a lighted lantern. When asked what he was doing, he said he was looking for an honest man. In this way he emphasized the scarcity of such people. By the search that Jeremiah was called upon to make, God emphasized the scarcity of the kind of people that were pleasing to Him in the city of Jerusalem. If you and I had lived in Jerusalem at that time, would we have qualified?

Why did the Lord want such a person? It was because his influence could be used to the preservation of the entire body of people. Paul teaches that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (First Corinthians 5:6). He was speaking of how the influence of evil can contaminate the whole body. But it is also true that good influence can sometimes be used to make things better. Bad can defile the good, but good can also drive out the evil when properly administered. Jerusalem, though warned of their impending doom because of their sins, could have been spared if they would only turn from their sinful manners and return to God. But who was there among them that could be used for this purpose?

Their Sins

As we read in Jeremiah, chapter five, we learn of many of the abominations that characterized Jerusalem at this time. In verse two, they swore by their false gods, and in verse three, they refused to be corrected. There are some people that just will not listen. They would not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears. Their heart was hardened and closed. They were a revolting and rebellious people. In verse four, they were foolish, not knowing the way of Jehovah, but they could have known as verse five teaches. In verse six, their transgressions were many, and they were backsliders. Even their great ones failed them. Verse seven, they were guilty of forsaking the needy and were overrunning with iniquity. Indeed, the spiritual state of Judah was one that grieved the heart of God and His prophet.

Someone has rightly said that the trouble with Judah can be defined with a set of “P’s”: their priests, prophets, princes, and people were polluted. The nation was almost like Elijah once thought Israel to be; namely, totally against God and none to follow Him except Elijah. While that later proved not to be exactly the case, the condition of the nation was one that could only lead to the doom predicted for it.

Religious People

Please take note that these were not irreligious people. God did not tell Jeremiah to find a religious person. There were plenty of those all around. But being religious and being righteous are not always the same. The people of Judah, like the Pharisees in Jesus’ day, conformed to many ceremonies and rituals, going through religious forms, but their heart and manner of life was evil. Are there not possibly many in churches today of whom just such an evaluation could also be given? Many people seem to have the idea that their religion should not interfere with their life. But let me ask, “Is there any realm, any activity, anything in which a Christian involves himself or herself that is not to be governed by the faith he professes?” Can you name anything in the life of a Christian that

ought not be regulated by the fact that he or she is a Christian? Our habits, words, thoughts, actions, associations, everything and anything must be under the umbrella of the truth that we are people of God and should conduct ourselves accordingly. If that is not as it ought to be, what is the value of following Christ in this life? While we properly observe the ceremony and ritual that is a part of worship and New Testament Christianity, should it not determine how we live at all times?

God's Love

But it is amazing to note that in spite of all this wickedness among the people, God still loved Judah. No, He did not approve of them, but He did love them and did not want to punish them. The reason He wanted to find this certain quality of person was so that from that person and with such an influence there might be a change among the manners of the people and they could be spared. Destruction was not the Lord's desire, but He longed to save them from their fate. As Peter wrote, "*The Lord is not willing that any should perish,*" but encourages mankind to repent.

This attitude was seen when Christ prayed over the city of Jerusalem. The people could have been gathered by the Lord but they would not have it so (Matthew 23:37). It is a wonderful thought to know how the love of God extends to us even while we are yet sinners. If only we would appreciate that love sufficiently to take advantage of the salvation He offers us.

It is inescapable for us to miss the emphasis of the value of a good person in this lesson. Sometimes we may conclude that we are so small and insignificant in this world that what we do and say really does not matter. But that is a false conclusion. There is no such thing as an unimportant person. Especially is this true among the righteous. Good people can be used by the Lord to bring salvation to all.

Consider the time when God told Abraham that He would not destroy the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah if only ten righteous souls could be found. Unfortunately, they could not be found and the entire people perished.

Be One

I would persuade you that if the freedoms and the blessings of our own land are to be preserved for the oncoming generations, it is the responsibility of the present age to be righteous and do good. Those of the degenerate conduct cannot save our land. They have within them the seeds of death, not preservation and life. The value of being good is not only for our personal benefit, but for those who follow after us and those who live among us. Evidently, there was an insufficiency of good people in Jerusalem because it soon fell beneath the mighty power and destruction of the Babylonians.

One has said that man has learned to swim through the water like a fish, and fly through the air like a bird, but has yet to learn how to walk on the earth like a man. Certainly many do not know how to walk like the man God sought.

But that day of Jerusalem has long since passed and those people failed to heed their warning. What of those of us living today? Shall we profit from their mistake or shall we persist in our own way and make the same mistake they made to our destruction and that of others? It is a decision each must make and for

which each shall be held accountable.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What kind of person was God seeking when He told Jeremiah to find a man?
2. Why was there such a need for such a person?
3. Were the people without religion?
4. What made their religion so useless?
5. Did God still love those people?
6. Did God approve of those people?
7. How can our freedoms and blessings be preserved for future generations?

Godly Motherhood

There are radicals who scoff at motherhood, denouncing the role of mother as something inferior to the glamorized careers in the world. But in our nation there is still a day set aside each year when everyone is called upon to pause and render honor to motherhood, each one's mother in particular. It is called "Mother's Day." It is not a religious ceremonial day, but it is a tradition when mothers are honored in special ways. While there is no Biblical authority to respect one Lord's Day above another, and Mother's Day is usually a Sunday, it is fitting and proper for us to meditate upon what the Bible teaches regarding motherhood.

One preacher honored his mother by saying, "My mother practices what I preach." Surely motherhood is one of the greatest roles God has conferred upon any human being. It is the task of building a life. As is true with all tremendous honors and privileges, there accompanies it awesome responsibilities. While father and mother are to share in bringing the child into the world and in the training of their children, the mother has a work and exerts an influence that cannot be done as effectively by any other person. She performs a service and looks well to her household where she reigns as queen of her castle, however humble that place might be.

The Lord's Pattern

In order for a mother to be a godly mother she needs a pattern to follow, and the Lord has provided His pattern with both instructions and records of examples what mothers should be. There is Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was submissive to God's plan and to whom even the Son of God was subject in His early years. There was Lois, the mother of the evangelist Timothy, who taught him the scriptures from his youth. We read of Sarah, Rachel, Mary, the mother of John Mark, each of them demonstrating exceptional qualities of character that go to making a woman and mother approved of God. There is another mother which shall be the center of our focus in this lesson of whom we read in the Old Testament and her name is Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, the mother of Samuel.

Hannah, though childless, longed for a child and prayed to God that she might have a child. She did not want the child for her own sake, but that she might consecrate her child to the service of the Lord and that he might live his life to the glory of God. Hannah's child was the fruit of prayer, having prayed when she was at the house of worship.

At a very early age, Samuel was brought to the priest, Eli, where he would live, be trained in God's service, and be used the way God saw fit. Hannah was certainly a godly mother in that she was a worshipper of the true and living God of heaven, a prayerful woman, unselfish, and one who realized that her offspring belonged to God and should be used to God's glory.

The giving of her child the way she did was the utmost in personal sacrifice and self-denial. It was a heroic deed. She deprived herself the light and joy of her child's face each day. While this kind of deprivation is not demanded of young mothers today, her self-abnegation reveals a devotion to the highest interest of both God and her son. She sought the best for the child, which is the manifestation of love. Every father and mother

ought give their child to the service of God and when they do, both they and the child shall be honored.

Samuel became the great Samuel of Israel. His manliness, purity, justice, dignity, devotion to the best interest of his people, his dedication to the heavenly Father, his stout vindication and defense of the ways of God may be traced to the deep piety and supreme faith and devotion to duty that characterized his mother. There is the old saying, "As the twig is bent, so grows the tree." Hannah bent the twig and Samuel became a mighty tree of righteousness.

From the Home

We live in a threatening period of human history unlike that which has gone before us in many ways. We should be concerned that our nation and the freedoms enjoyed herein be preserved for our descendants. This conservative and preservative influence will not come from the law-making halls of Congress, or the state legislatures. It will not be from the factories and schools, or even the launching pads and computer panels. It cannot come through armies and weapons, though they have their place. It will come from our homes, the basic and fundamental unit of society. The homes of our nation bear the imprint of the character of mothers, just as all the rest of society bears the imprint of the home. The stream cannot rise above the fountain. The home is the fountain of the stream of national life. Mothers, more than any other special segment of society, can make the home as it ought to be. This is not to dismiss the father or other needed influences, but is said to emphasize the majestic and mighty role of motherhood in the land.

Need For Mothers

This role cannot be properly filled with mothers who love the sinful things of this world, who are given to their own selfish interests above the welfare of their households. Mothers who grant their children unlimited indulgence will not guide their children aright. Selfishness cannot get the task accomplished. Children cannot be abandoned to the follies and vices of a degenerate age. Mothers must implant in the hearts and minds of their offspring the standards of God.

Mothers will never do the work they must do when they deliberately leave their posts of duty to the neglect of their primary work in the home. While we realize this is a message that is unheeded and unwanted in our present society, it is still the message people need to hear and heed. The cultivation of selfish ambitions rather than cultivating in their children the ambition to do right and be right before God is to fail in the divinely assigned task of motherhood. What many females today have not realized is that what is called "women's liberation" is more often a return to the bondage of sin, a government of self for self, a repudiation of the high and holy for the beggarly rudiments this world temporarily offers.

The trail of heartbreak and agony, ruined lives, broken homes, is too pronounced for us to ever expect that mothers can mold their children as they ought when they are in pursuit of lesser goals than godly motherhood. History as well as inspired Scripture bears this truth out to us.

While some complain that the stern quality of spirit and the rigor of discipline in

the old Puritan homes was extreme, it obviously was vastly better than the lawless and indulgent homes of the present. At least there was the respect of God and the family. There was the dignity of the home, a reverence toward the sanctity of marriage, a righteous upbringing of the young, a relative absence of divorce and delinquency. In our modern “progress” we are being inundated with broken homes, selfish careers, “latch-key” children, immoralities, disrespect for authority, the murder of unborn children by abortion, and millions of run-aways who no longer can tolerate the sorry conditions imposed on them by those who should provide a wholesome home.

Which Direction?

There is no denial that homes of the past as a rule produced firm and noble characters. Yes, “You’ve come a long way, baby,” but who has stopped to consider the direction you have been going? If there is no call for the stern ways of yesteryear and those other righteous qualities that were evident, there is a call to exercise greater vigilance than has been of late. There is the need for the maintenance of authority, the respect for which is learned at home. Disrespect for authority is also learned at home. There is the need for the cultivation of moral and religious training that must begin and continue in the home. There is the need for emphasis on an intelligent and fervent piety that will lead fathers, mothers, and children to reverence God. There is the demand that parents protect their children from the ravages of evil even as they teach them the difference between right and wrong. There is the urgency to show them the dignity of work and the danger of idleness, pride, dishonesty, and the attitude that everybody owes me something. What is most needful can and should be supplied by the godly mothers.

Sowing and Reaping

What we sow, we reap. That is true in every realm, and in no realm is it more evident than in the family unit and development in which the mother is a major component. Many mothers sow in tears, work, self-denial, pain and sacrifice but they will reap in joy and find their highest happiness when they can see the purity, nobility, goodness and Christlikeness in the lives of her children. Proverbs 31:28, “*Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.*” Possibly in this matter above all others it can be said of the godly mother, “*Thou excellest them all*” (Proverbs 31:29). The world groans and agonizes in need of godly mothers who instill in the hearts and lives of their children the righteousness of God.

Rather than simply having the capacity to reproduce, or to be glamorous, greedy, grasping for gain and glory, we need mothers whose goal is godliness. The following parable, written by Temple Bailey, presents what should be the ambition of every mother regarding her children.

The young Mother set her foot on the path of life. “Is the way long?” she asked. And her Guide said, “Yes, and the way is hard. And you will be old before you reach the end of it. But the end will be better than the beginning.”

But the young Mother was happy, and she would not believe that anything could be better than these years. So she played with her children, and gathered flowers for them along the way, and bathed with them in the clear streams; and the sun shone on

them, and life was good, and the young Mother cried, "Nothing will ever be lovelier than this."

The night came, and storm, and the path was dark, and the children shook with fear and cold, and the Mother drew them close and covered them with her mantle, and the children said, "Oh, Mother, we are not afraid, for you are near, and no harm can come," and the Mother said, "This is better than the brightness of day, for I have taught my children courage.

And the morning came, and there was a hill ahead, and the children climbed and grew weary, and the Mother was weary, but at all times she said to the children, "A little patience, and we are there." So the children climbed, and when they reached the top, they said, "We could not have done it without you, Mother."

And the Mother, when she lay down that night, looked up at the stars, and said, "This is a better day than the last, for my children have learned fortitude in the face of hardness. Yesterday I gave them courage. Today I have given them strength."

And the next day came strange clouds which darkened the earth--clouds of war and hate and evil, and the children groped and stumbled, and the Mother said, "Look up. Lift your eyes to the Light." And the children looked and saw above the clouds an Everlasting Glory, and it guided them and brought them beyond the darkness. And that night the Mother said, "This is the best day of all, for I have shown my children God."

And the days went on, and the weeks, and the months, and the years, and the Mother grew old, and she was little and bent. But her children were tall and strong, and walked with courage. And when the way was hard, they helped their Mother; and when the way was rough, they lifted her, for she was as light as a feather; and at last they came to a hill and beyond the hill they could see a shining road and golden gates flung wide.

And the Mother said, "I have reached the end of my journey. And now I know that the end is better than the beginning, for my children can walk alone, and their children after them."

And the children said, "You will always walk with us, Mother, even when you have gone through the gates."

And they stood and watched her as she went on alone, and the gates closed after her. And they said: "We cannot see her, but she is with us still. A Mother like ours is more than a memory. She is a Living Presence."

Honor Due

So as the world may honor mothers on "Mother's Day," we who are Christians go a step further and honor those mothers who show God to her children in word, attitude, and deed. Many of us have been blessed with God's boundless favor by having a godly mother. Some hold them today only in memory. Many a lady has the privilege of being a godly mother. Some have children who are now grown and others still with infants. We pray that the influence of godly mothers might increase in our world. "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." May we ever proclaim throughout the world, "*Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.*" (Proverbs 31:30).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What has God provided for mothers to assist them in being a godly mother?
2. Who is presented in this lesson as a godly mother?
3. What qualities did she exhibit that depict her as godly?
4. What was her attitude toward her child?
5. Discuss a mother's primary work.
6. What is meant by the phrase, "The hand that rocks the cradle rule the world"?
7. What is your attitude toward the contrast of the Puritan homes and homes today?
8. Whose imprint is most indelibly stamped on the home?

Good Homes

Good Churches

A former Bible teacher of mine told of visits he made into different homes, both homes of elders of the church. One had two married sons, active in the church. He said he came away from that visit thinking how **good homes help make good churches**. During the other visit he asked the elder where he had met his wife. It was at a worship service. They attended the same Bible classes, married at the church building by a faithful gospel preacher. They discussed how the church had been such a help to them through the years in times of trials, problems, and grief, providing strength, encouragement, comfort, and power to face difficulties. He said he came away from that visit thinking how **good churches help make good homes**.

It is certainly true that good churches contribute in the establishment and maintenance of good homes. It is also true that good homes contribute to building and maintaining good churches. Like the two rails of a railroad track, they complement each other. Each is vital and necessary to the other. While in a sense independent, they are also dependent one upon the other. After all, both came from God and are divinely planned. One began at Eden and the other on Pentecost. Side by side they contribute to the welfare of each other.

Benefits The Home

Consider for a moment the benefit rendered by the church to the home. We might start by considering actual physical assistance that is sometimes offered. First Timothy 5:16 authorizes the church to offer relief where needed. Money, food, clothes, and physical care are all within the nature of the help the church can offer to those in physical distress. But more often there is the spiritual assistance: instruction, training, guidance, counsel, direction, encouragement, sympathy, fellowship, opportunity for worship and service and study that the church provides for every member of the home. The eldership has the watchcare for the souls of all who are members. This is a part of God's plan for keeping brethren from falling away.

Consider the benefit the church renders to the children in the home. They are involved in classes where they are taught from an early age. They learn to love, share, have respect for authority, seek higher levels of morality than what the sinful world would have them accept. They learn the value of honesty, purity, and self-respect. The church assists parents in the training of children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

One juvenile judge once reported that he had tried nearly 14,500 cases of young people under seventeen years of age. In only two instances did both parents attend Sunday school classes with their children. In only 93 cases were the young people attending classes at the time they got into trouble. Don't you see the good influence offered by the church? Don't you see why the church urges parents to bring and accompany their children in such activities? The home and church working together is of eternal as well as temporal benefit to young people.

But the benefit is not just to the young. *“The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things, that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed”* (Titus 2:3-5). There is to be the coupling of Biblical instruction with practical experience of older Christians taking advantage of the wisdom of godly people.

Opportunity To Worship

Then consider the value of the opportunity for worship that the church affords the family. Families worshipping together have a great bond. It is a true saying, “Families that pray together, stay together.” Children are impressed by example as they see their parents active in worship to God. They learn where true value lies. They learn to respect God and His will. No greater heritage can parents give to their children than a strong parental example of faith in God. Such worship opportunities are instances of the church taking an interest in families. This is one reason we should be repulsed at the idea of “children’s church” where children are removed from their parents and shuttled off somewhere else, deprived of the opportunity to not only learn as they can by word and by demonstration, but to witness their parents in devotion to God in worship.

Association

The church affords association with the finest people on earth. *“Evil companionships corrupt good morals”* (First Corinthians 15: 33). People of the church being together provide the fellowship for each other and make being a Christian a joy and privilege in this life. Good companions encourage good morals. The preventive side of Christianity is realized in Christian association. Many Christians have benefited immeasurably from fellowship with their brethren. In good times and bad times, Christians help each other get to heaven. They enjoy the wisdom and counsel, as well as the example, of godly people around them. There is no other conclusion that can be drawn except that good churches that are fulfilling the role God assigned to churches help make good homes.

But let us now consider how good homes help make good churches. Have you read the recipe for a good home? “You will need one husband, one wife, children to suit yourselves. Next, cream one cup of love until it is fluffy and mellow. Add one-half cup of tears and hardships and stir gently. Whip in a cup of joy; when smooth, add one teaspoon each of thoughtfulness, heartfelt tenderness and sympathy. Add one cup of ambition with two cups of Christianity generally. Bake in a moderate oven, top with kindness and serve repeatedly.”

There is no passage in the Bible that begins, “The home should be...” The Bible does give specific and general principles, however. This teaching includes instructions to husbands, wives, children concerning responsibilities, blessings, and privileges. Homes that listen to the teaching of the Bible will be of inestimable value to the church.

To Husbands

To husbands we read, *“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them”* (Colossians 3:19). *“Likewise, ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered”* (First Peter 3:7). *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it”* (Ephesians 5:25). *“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church”* (Ephesians 5:28,29).

To Wives

To wives we read, *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord”* (Colossians 3:18). *“That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed”* (Titus 3:4,5). *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything”* (Ephesians 5:22-24). How this runs against the grain to those women who think they are smarter than God and are running around promoting what they mistakenly call equal rights and the feminist movement. One thing for sure, they are not very feminine, and are certainly Jezebels as far as the teaching of God’s book is concerned. How can things that are innately different, with different roles and purposes in life, ever be declared equal to one another in all matters? It is sheer ungodly, defiant and rebellious nonsense. No Christian, man or woman, would lend support to such a concept. In our twentieth century some have considered the wisdom of God to be outmoded and outdated regarding the role of husband and wife. But they only show their own folly. When God’s will is obeyed homes will be better and the result will be that even churches will be better as well as the rest of the world.

David Lipscomb wrote, *“The submission of the wife to the husband is that of love, respect and reverence which is befitting the relation she holds to her husband. In her sphere she is spiritually on an equality with man, but as a husband, he is the natural scriptural recognized head and leader of the family. Her submission must be in accordance with the principles of righteousness, and nothing is required of her inconsistent with Christian character. This submission of the wife, when rightly understood and practiced, accords with her inner nature, is in harmony with her relation to God and others, and is productive of the fullest development of her character, her highest happiness and good.”*

The husband is not to be a tyrant. Wives are to be subject to their own husbands. It is not all that hard for a wife to obey God by being submissive to her husband when her husband also obeys God in his attitude and action toward his wife.

To Children

To children we read, *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth”* (Ephesians 6:1-3). *“Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord”* (Colossians 3:20). It was said of Jesus when He was a child, *“And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them, but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man”* (Luke 2:51,52). Parents are to be honored and obeyed. They are also to so conduct themselves that it is easy for children to obey God in this matter.

Parents are to encourage, lead, guide, instruct their young to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. *“And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4). In so doing, parents will be helping the church as well as the home. Good homes provide proper examples for children to follow. Good homes uphold, rather than tear down, the church. Good homes put Christ and His kingdom first in all things. When the home is as it ought to be and the church is greatly assisted.

Influence On The Church

The influence of the home regarding the church is tremendous. When both parents are united in Christ and active in the church ninety-three percent of their children are faithful to the church of the Lord. When one parent is active there is quite a drop to only seventy-three per cent remaining faithful. When parents are inactive, members in name only, only fifty-three per cent remain loyal to Christ. When parents worship irregularly only six per cent remain faithful. This ought to give parents something to consider when they think of the spiritual welfare of their children and the spiritual climate in the home, and how one affects the other. The conclusion is again beyond escape. Good homes help make good churches.

But what of your home, your family, and the church of the Lord? You are a member of the home and possibly the church also. Is it not our duty before God to make both of these divine institutions as God would have them and to the greatest degree we are capable? When the church and home work together good comes from it. When there is conflict and division between the home and the church there is eternal harm. The place to begin to make both more as God wants is with each individual. My part begins with me and your part begins with you. When members of the family and members of the church work together with one another and with God all shall be blessed. It begins with becoming a Christian and continues with being what you have become.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In what ways can the home be of benefit to the church?
2. In what ways can the church benefit the home?
3. Discuss the result of conflict between the church and the home.
4. Who was the originator of both the home and the church?

Has Your Home Been Robbed?

There is a master thief loose in the land, always at work, striking wherever he can. He picks our pockets, robs our homes, steals our most valuable possessions. He even lifts the spiritual seed from the hearts and minds of those to whom it is offered. He plants doubt, fear, error in its place. We know who the thief is and even many of the ways that he works. But too often we show slight concern about it.

This thief is so deceptive and sly, sometimes the theft is so gradual that those who are being robbed are not even aware of it. They go on about life so satisfied, as if everything is fine. They are so fascinated by the human solutions to problems, spellbound over the temporary and worthless offerings of the sinful world, that they lose sight of real treasure.

We hear much about burglary, larceny and homes being entered and property stolen. It is almost an epidemic in many places. But we all need to look about our homes. We may discover that we have been robbed, and have not even been aware of it. Precious things have been taken from us.

The Bible

Where is the Bible in your home? Certainly you have one somewhere. Nearly all homes have a Bible, don't they? It may well be covered with dust or other reading material because it is used so infrequently or it may be pushed back on some back shelf. You may as well not have one for all the benefit you get from it. Some people keep one around for emergencies, like sickness, weddings, funerals, or a visit from church people, especially the preacher.

But where is the Biblical influence in your home? Many homes are far more influenced by newspapers, magazines, journals, television, which often are not even fit to be seen and read, but are being consumed by the mind. Many homes have been robbed of the *"lamp unto our feet, and the light unto our path way."*

Wherever the Bible is not prominently used in the home, ignorance of the will of God prevails. Confusion and misunderstanding will reign where understanding is needful. Trust in God is displaced by trust in self or some other human being or material something. The Bible has been robbed from many homes today and the result is disaster.

Worship

Where is the family worship in your home? "The family that prays together, stays together." This says more than we may at first recognize. Families that pray together show a common respect for God. They know what matters. Their values are in proper order. Prayer is one manifestation that the family is founded on something sound and eternal. Families like that seldom suffer the ravages of divorce, delinquency, hatred, quarreling, strife, bickering and separations. There is no force on earth more powerful to cement families than mutual love and respect for each other and God. Love for God

keeps people loving one another. Families can take tensions and problems from outside and inside the home when they have their feet planted on solid spiritual truth.

Every home needs a two-way communication with God in Bible study and prayer. Most homes have radios, televisions, telephones with extensions, with all kinds of messages coming and going back and forth. Has your home been robbed of communication with God? Does your child know what it is to hear his father pray? Does he pray? Does he study his Bible, if of age to do so? Do you?

Values

Satan has really taken a deadly toll in many homes in disturbing the values of the home. The abundance of material things is often counted better than matters spiritual and eternal. Fun, rather than genuine joy and happiness, is sought. Seeking the praise and acceptance of the people of the world is the goal of many homes more than approval before God. Financial and other physical aspirations exceed the determination to serve God. Secular education is preferred to enlightenment of the soul. Money comes before morals. Pleasure is the name of the game with so many. Little wonder that young people grow up confused and empty. Look at what has been taken from their homes. They hardly had a chance to see or know anything of real value. With the home being little more than a filling station, both parents out making money, children neglected, the right and wrong according to God being ignored, how can anybody expect much more than what we are reaping in society today?

Discipline

The home that is without firm and kind discipline has been robbed. Adults need to practice self-discipline and the young need to be disciplined. To discipline is to train. *“The rod and reproof give correction, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame”* (Proverbs 29:15). So many children are just allowed to physically grow up. They are not guided nor taught. Given no basic values, they are left to make decisions without the ability and knowledge to know how to make decisions. They do not even know what matters. How can they make intelligent and worthwhile decisions?

Character is formed by discipline. This involves more than chastisement, though this has its place. It is showing the child the way he should go. Words, accompanied by deeds, is the way to train. Some parents say so little to their children, do not even know what their children are thinking, who they are, where they go, what they are doing, with whom they run, and set such a poor example before them as well. Most of the fault for wayward youth lies at the feet of parents of the home. So many have failed because of their own selfishness and greed and their children suffer and the home decays.

Authority

A home where there are no rule enforced is a home that breeds contempt for authority. The overbearing tyrannical rule will crush a child and turn him into a rebel. Also, the home that is lax and permissive will produce a leach on society and a shame to the home. What every home needs is the moral and spiritual guidance found from our Lord in the Bible. But many who are the authorities in the home think they are smarter

than God and dismiss Him completely. So much of the problems of society and the home are brewed in the home that fails to exhibit proper respect and exercise of authority. Children either learn to respect authority or learn they can rebel against it. How is it with you and yours?

Thankfulness

Has your home been robbed of thanking God at mealtime? Has Satan removed that out of the way at your house? You may think this is unimportant, but it teaches a basic truth that God is the source of our blessings and thanksgiving to Him is expected and proper. It is no more than courtesy to thank those who give to you. We teach our young to be rude and uncouth to think that whatever they get is from our own efforts alone. Grace at meals gives glory to God. He deserves all the honor we can bestow. The least we could do is to thank Him at mealtime. But some families are like a pen of hogs, who just snort in eating and stuffing, giving no thought to the source of their blessings. Like the hog filling himself with acorns, he never looks up to see from whence they came.

Lord's Day

What consideration is given the Lord's Day at your house? More and more families consider Sunday just another day off from work to do as they please, go boating, play ball, sleep late, play golf, do anything you want. They never give God a thought even on Lord's Day. This is being taught in our society as the "in" thing. Even members of the church act like the worship services are an intrusion on "the only day I have."

Fruit borne proves the point. There was a time when people worshipped God on the first day of the week, spent time in spiritual thought, used the day for families and visiting and worship, attended to the affairs of the church, rested, gave themselves to good self-examination before God, and considered what really matters in life. But today, there is the constant blaring of sports, riotous living, even using the day to get more dollars in overtime. Merchandising is rampant. Even people who call themselves faithful Christians will absent themselves from the assembly of saints in the local church to have their good times. Some defiantly excuse themselves by taking the Lord's Supper with them as if this satisfies the teaching of the Bible. Such arrogant rebellion against truth is commonplace among brethren and it is wrong as can be!

We may not like the truth, but the truth is that the nation was a better nation when the stores were closed and ball games were played on Saturday. There is such a preponderance of secular and sinful thought among people today that even attending worship is considered odd. What a pity and shame! Has your home been robbed of properly using the Lord's Day? Does everybody at your house know that the first day of the week is the day of worship before everything else, that it belongs to God, that it is a time for studying His Word, showing love for each other, attending to the soul?

Maybe you heard about the preacher announcing a most important business meeting to take place one Sunday afternoon. It so happened that the matter had to be decided but it was Super Bowl Sunday. The members were so overtaken in the world that this posed a problem for them. The preacher announced the meeting for six o'clock sharp and reminded brethren that it was one of the most important meetings in the history of the

church. But then he added, “In case of overtime we will postpone the meeting until next week.” This is the mentality of many today. Their homes have been invaded by the world, even things that are not sinful in themselves have pushed the primary things into second place. As I was growing up, nobody treated Sunday like just some other day. Even denominationalists had more respect than that. Today, however, you hear and see all kinds of activities accompanying neglect for the way of God. Yes, there may be times when “the ox is in the ditch,” but if that persists, you either ought to sell the ox or fill up the ditch. This “sign of our times” is one of disregard toward the Almighty. And at your house, how is it?

Real Treasure

If your home has been robbed of its spiritual treasures, do not you think it is about time that they are either recovered, restored and protected? Has not the way of Satan been eroding the firm foundation of spirituality in your home long enough? It is time you “put your foot down” on the devil’s neck, rearrange whatever needs to be rearranged so God gets first priority at your house. We put all kinds of alarms, window latches, lights, signals and warnings around the house to protect our physical properties. This is useful. But do not you think you need to pay more attention to the warnings coming your way about the spiritual robbery that may well be taking place right before you?

We do not have any recommendation for some new-fangled device to warn you of the devil or to keep him out of your home. The only device we know is the one that has worked everywhere it has been seriously and genuinely applied. That is a good and regular serving of the Word of God. It is strange that the very thing that Satan wants to take from us the most is what can keep him from robbing us at all. We need a Christian oriented set of values, family worship, respect for the Lord’s Day, two-way communication with God, example, discipline, respect for authority, thanksgiving at meals, character building in the home. The home will do more along these lines when the church will teach the home to fulfill its mission. Then things will be protected and preserved. The church cannot take the place of the home, nor can the church very often overcome the home and what the home does to its members.

Members of the home, mostly the parents, that have allowed Satan to take away what matters from the home can get these things back there if they will. But who will? That is up to each one. Unless you get and stay busy at the task your home will continue to be pillaged until it is spiritually impoverished. Then you can think about it for eternity, in hell.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who is the robber of the treasures of your home?
2. How can the Bible be robbed from the home?
3. What values are often robbed from the home?
4. Name other desirable qualities that can be taken from the home.
5. How can we recover those things that may have been robbed from us?

Heaven

When I began the publication of *A BURNING FIRE* fifteen years and eighteen volumes ago the first lesson was on the subject of heaven. After all, heaven is the goal, holding priority for us in everything we do in this life. This is our one hope. It seemed appropriate to me to include in this study of the home a lesson on heaven, our ultimate and eternal spiritual home which God has provided for the redeemed and the faithful.

Heaven is mentioned over six hundred times in the Bible. To be sure, it does not always refer to the same thing or same place. For instance, in Luke 15:21 when the prodigal son was making his confession of wrongdoing (sinning against heaven), and Matthew 21:25, when Jesus asked regarding the baptism of John whether it was from heaven or men, heaven is used to refer to God and His authority.

In Deuteronomy 1:28 and 9:1 heaven refers to something of great height, “*cities walled to heaven,*” or “*fenced up to heaven.*”

Repeatedly, heaven refers to the abode of the Father, “*Our Father which art in heaven.*” (Matthew 6:9), as one example.

In Matthew 5:12 Jesus said, “*great is your reward in heaven...*,” meaning the place of reward and the abode of the blessed. Like many other matters, the meaning is determined by the context. It is in this last sense that we think of heaven as home. How many, many songs we sing that speak of heaven, and heaven as home. Heaven is called the home of the soul. We must needs go home by the way of the cross. We think of the home over there. We ask the Lord to lead me gently home. When we request, “O, give me a home,” it is this home for which we long more than any other.

Heaven as Seen by the Jews

In the Jewish mind there were three heavens, possibly four (a disputed but unimportant matter). Genesis 1:7,8 speaks of the air, where birds fly, storms rage, clouds form. Genesis 1:17, heaven refers to space, the place of the sun, moon, stars, and planets. As mentioned, it often refers to the dwelling place of God. Then we have the location of heaven in Paul’s vision, recorded in Second Corinthians 12:1-4. Paul called it the “third heaven.” meaning the Hadean realm and Paradise. He was caught up “into paradise.” Paradise was where Jesus went when He died, but that was not the abode of the Father for He had not yet ascended to the Father even after His resurrection (John 20:17).

From the earliest Biblical history men knew something better was over there (Enos, Enoch). Revelation from God guarantees a life beyond, but where? Our hope is not limited to this life (First Corinthians 15:19). Heavenly reward is still future. Hebrews 13:14, “*Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*” The heaven for which we hope is part of the good news. We can lay up treasures in heaven that perish not (Matthew 16:19-21).

What Will Heaven Be Like?

While this is not our major concern in this lesson, let me answer by saying it will be like nothing that we can adequately describe because of its grandeur. Literal language is simply too tame and commonplace to be adequate. But we can be sure that however heaven will be, it will be to our liking.

There are many questions regarding heaven for which specific answers are not given us. They only provoke speculation, which may be interesting but uncertain, and we cannot become dogmatic about unlearned, and untaught questions.

Do we go immediately to heaven upon physical death? On this question we can be reasonably certain, and the answer is that we (our spirits) go to the unseen state of the dead, the intermediate state between death and the resurrection, called Hades, which is composed of Paradise (Abraham's bosom), and also a place of torments, where the rich man went at his death (Luke 16). There are those who contend we go directly to heaven at death. It really does not concern me too much either way, but the more consistent position must consider the timing of the judgment. Entrance into heaven follows the judgment.

Who will and will not go there? This is determined by our individual response to the call of Christ. We must be born again (John 3:3-5). Those who obey shall be saved (Second Thessalonians 1:6-9), and those who don't, won't. No thieves will go there (Luke 12:33), or such as those listed in First Corinthians 6:10, nor unclean persons (Revelation 21:27), spiritually unclean, unwashed by the blood of the Lamb. Revelations 21:8 and Galatians 6:19ff mentions others who will not go there.

Sometimes brethren are criticized with such words, "Do you think you are the only ones going to heaven?" We can confidently say that nobody is promised to go there that rejects the gospel and refuses to obey it. It is open to "whosoever will." The trouble is with the whosoever that will not obey but contend they will go there anyway.

Will we recognize each other in heaven? We can only say that even though the Holy Spirit does not directly address this question, recognition is strongly implied. Future life implies memory that connects with the former life. Inhabitants of the realm beyond the grave are reported as conscious of their whereabouts. They were conversing with each other in recognition regarding the past. The thief requested, "*Lord, remember me...*" (Luke 23:42). The rich man knew Lazarus and Abraham, and Abraham knew them both. Moses and Elijah were identified at the transfiguration of Christ long after they had died.

I would not suggest we shall recognize one another by physical features, heaven being a spiritual realm, and we will have a spiritual body (First Corinthians 15:44). But how does one spirit recognize another? I confess this goes beyond my ability to comprehend.

Paul said he would be present with the Lord and his Corinthian brethren, which implies recognition (Second Corinthians 4:14). The Thessalonians were taught the redeemed would be raised together, implying recognition (First Thessalonians 4:13-18). David said he could go to his son (Second Samuel 12:23), implying he would know that event. Beyond this, I risk no more.

Some have complained that if we do recognize others we would be miserable if someone we loved was not there. First, I want to be sure they are there and must do all I can to help them get there. And I want to get there myself. But had you rather miss those absent or ignore those who are there? Take God's Word for it. Heaven will be pleasant,

regardless of what we may or may not know or recognize.

Will There Be Degrees of Reward and Punishment?

Again, indications are in the affirmative. Luke 12:42-48 speaks of few stripes and many stripes. Matthew 11:21-24 mentions the judgment being more tolerable for some than others. The parable of the talents indicates different rewards (Matthew 25:14-31). We shall be judged according to our works, and they differ (Revelation 20:13). We shall enjoy the joy according to our spiritual maturity and capacity. Paul says it will be very far better (Philippians 1:23), so let us leave it there.

Heaven Is A Real Place

Heaven is not simply a state of mind (John 14:1-4). It is a *“place,”* a spiritual place. It is called a holy city (Revelation 22:19). It is where Christ went to prepare (John 14), to which He ascended (Acts 1), and called the Father’s house (John 14).

A spiritual place may be only expressed in material terms, like twelve foundations, gates, gems, twelve thousand furlongs, etc. These terms are figurative, like the street of gold, the perfect cube. But the important thing to remember is that God is there (Revelation 2 1:3). *“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and he their God.”* (The relationship of these words with the church is a subject we will not enter here, but has application.)

More About Heaven and What It Will Be

Heaven is presented as a place of worship, beauty, perfect happiness, security, and an eternal existence with God. It is a new place, free of sin, no pain, no death, no sorrow, no tears, no night (Revelation 21:4). Second Peter three specifies the end of the present heaven and earth, and a new habitation, a place fit for the abode of the redeemed. It will be joyful, eternal, blissful, and an existence that is good and pure. There will be the location of the tree of life, the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7). It was from this tree that man was barred when he sinned in Eden (Genesis 3:23). It is not a literal tree, but a figure and symbol of life. What a wonderful home awaits us.

Heaven is described as a place of reward, a *“crown of life”* (Revelation 2:10), and a *“crown of righteousness”* (Second Timothy 4:6-8), where the soul never dies.

Heaven is in the presence of God, therefore, the fullness of joy. *“In thy presence is fullness of joy”* (Psalm 16:11). Jesus is there (Hebrews 9:24). He has entered into heaven itself.

Heaven is called a *“better country”* (Hebrews 11:16), a place of security (Matthew 20), that shall last forever (Matthew 25:46). There is no curse there (Revelation 22:1-3), and those who are there are identified with God.

Paul in Romans 2:7 shows heaven to be a place of glory, honor, immortality, peace, and eternal life. God will be on the throne (Revelation 22:3). It is that Sabbath rest, spoken of in Hebrews 4:9, *“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”* In

Revelation 14:13, those there will be blessed. Revelation 7:15,16, *“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.”*

The mention of the temple implies heaven will be a place of worship. Who was worshipping in Revelation 7:14 but those whose robes had been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb?

Heaven Is A Gift; An Inheritance

God forbid that we ever think that we can earn, merit, or deserve heaven. Heaven is an inheritance to God’s children (First Peter 1:4), and given to us (Matthew 25:34). To be sure, there are conditions we must meet first. We are invited to go there (Revelation 22:17; Acts 10:34,35), and we can go there provided we do as God commands us. Even when we obey, we earn nothing. We are given access into His grace. We do well to ask, will a religion that won’t even take you to worship in this life, take you to heaven?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why do we refer to heaven as home?
2. How many times is heaven mentioned in the Bible?
3. What were the heavens considered by the Jews?
4. Try to describe heaven.
5. Do you think we shall know each other in heaven? Why?
6. Who is promised heaven?
7. Do we go immediately to heaven or to Hades?
8. Are there degrees of reward and punishment? Give reason for your answer.
9. Can we ever earn heaven?
10. What are some of the terms Scripture uses to describe heaven?
11. Why is heaven called a Sabbath rest? (Hebrews 4:1,3,8,9,11)

Honor Thy Mother

Each year there is a day that is designated as Mother's Day in our nation. This is not because there is a Biblical direction for a special day to honor mothers, but it is a custom of our people as a nation. It is in harmony with the Biblical injunction to honor parents. There is no special religious ritual attached to Mother's Day, nor is it placed as a special holy day by the New Testament Christian. But it is a time for expression of attitudes, and the exercise of a privilege to honor mothers. This honoring of mother, like that of honoring father, is a duty taught in the Word of God whether or not we have a special day called Mother's Day or Father's Day.

Why do we have such a special day as Mother's Day? The actual observance of this day grew from a modest beginning in 1872 as a day dedicated to peace. On May 9, 1914 then President Woodrow Wilson signed a resolution of Congress commending its observance. The next year the President was authorized to declare Mother's Day as a day of national observance, and it has been a national custom to this day.

But the honoring of motherhood is not of man, but of God. We honor mothers, not because of a Congressional resolution, but because of a divine teaching. We honor mothers, not just one day of the year, but throughout the year. In ancient times, as today, motherhood was considered a great and special blessing. God commanded through Moses, "*Honor thy father and thy mother...*" (Exodus 20:12). The same teaching is in the new covenant in Ephesians 6:2.

Our day is often characterized among many with a glaring and obvious disrespect for age, the past, parents, and authority. We could wish this day might be a day of real significance in learning more perfectly the will of the Lord regarding respect for parents. Proverbs 30:11, "*There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.*" This could be said of many in our time.

Meaning of Honoring Mother

What does it mean to honor your mother? It may include paying her a visit, giving her a gift, sending her a card, making a telephone call to her, writing her a letter, even wearing a special flower on that day to commemorate whether she is living or dead. All these things are nice. But there are much, much more things of deeper significance. To honor means to regard and treat with great respect and esteem. The very definition includes both the heart and the manifestation of the attitude in the heart. It is a disposition toward mother that demonstrates itself in deeds.

This would include the way we speak to her and of her. While many may consider it old fashioned, but referring to mother by her first name seems to place her on the level no different from any other. But mothers are on a level that demands more consideration, special consideration, than other relationships. Our address of her should reflect this unique relationship and her rank and position. It is a serious mistake to speak of her as "the old woman" because many use that terminology to convey disrespect. There is no more warm and beautiful term than to simply call her, Mother, or similar words that denote she is in a special place in the heart and life. This discarding of formality between

parent and child does something to detract from the respect children owe parents. We acknowledge that parents are friends. But they are far more than just other friends. They are parents. They deserve recognition that they are not just another among others.

Obedience

Honoring mother cannot be separated from obedience to her, especially while under her charge and care. Ephesians 6:1 teaches children to obey parents. This is commanded just before and is based upon the teaching to honor father and mother. How could one think he honors his parents if and when he ignores and disobeys them? Proverbs 1:8, *“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.”*

Obedience to parents must be taught and learned. Children do not come into this world naturally knowing to be obedient. They have to be trained to obey authority. Disrespect for authority, just as respect for authority, is learned, and this learning begins in the home. The lawlessness, rioting, immoral conduct, all reflect the breakdown of respect for authority in the home where parents have failed in guiding aright their children. We see all around us in society the dire results of disrespect for authority, the evils of indulgence, spoiled and bratty children whose parents never taught them to obey. The most frustrated young people today are those who have not been taught to respect authority. They do not even know right from wrong, nor how to make decisions because they have been given no basis by which to govern their lives. Children who are taught to obey parents and love parents will have a completely different approach to life and toward God as well as all other authorities under which they will be subjected in life. It begins with parents and must be followed by children. While there are certain commendable interests manifested in the "buddy" relationship with parents, we dare not let it reduce itself to the point that respect and honor for parents as parents is diminished.

Giving Care

Honoring parents includes caring for them in their time of need. Proverbs 23:22, *“Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.”* Common sense, fair play and natural affection shows that we should care for those who cared for us. Who has cared for us more than mother? Of course, we speak of mothers who are honorable and who attend to their prime duties. It is unfortunate that many women have been led astray from their prime work into paths of selfish gratification of their own ambitions to the neglect of their children.

First Timothy 5:6 reads, *“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.”* The Jews in the time of Jesus were in line for condemnation when they neglected the care of their needy parents. Matthew 15:4, *“Honor thy father and mother, and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.”* He went on to show that they, by their traditions, had set aside this commandment of God. They did not use their resources to provide for their parents by contending they had already committed their substance to something else, as if that relieved them of their divinely appointed responsibility. Surely, parents who have given their very lives for the benefit of their children should not be cast aside when they grow old. This smacks more of paganism and heathenism than Christianity. We set aside

a command of God to fail to provide care for their needs in their hour of need.

Showing Love

We honor mothers when we show genuine love for them. This includes more than merely sentiment. We may take it for granted that our mothers know we love them, but it is proper that we make special effort to let them know we do. This warms their hearts and encourages them as well as us, giving us opportunity to render honor to whom honor is due. Mothers do not grow too old to receive affection. The embrace of a child regardless of her age or the child's age is a part of the small reward children can give parents. Proverbs 15.20, "*A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.*" What a brilliant light of joy is cast into the life of a mother when her children show their love and affection for her. One of the saddest stories I have ever heard was that of a mother who was burned and scarred when saving the life of her son from flames. She became stooped and bent with work and sacrifice to educate him. But on the day of his graduation he was so ashamed of her appearance that he refused to even introduce her to his friends. Hell could not be too hot for such people! How could anyone ever reduce himself or herself to be ashamed of a godly mother? It is beyond reason and deplorable in any language.

Manner of Life

But is there a way to honor mother more effectively than to live a godly life? Words may fail to adequately express our feelings toward her. Our contact with her may be limited because of various circumstances that come in life. We may be able only to show through gifts that we care. But whether your mother be living or dead, carrying forward in your own life the way of God that she taught you, that she lived before you, is the greatest manifestation of honor that you can bestow upon her.

Why is this true? It is true because you not only honor her, but you honor what she honored above all else. You honor God!

Someone has said that there is no mother like the mother that reared us. We add to that, there is no blessing any greater than a godly mother. I am among those who know this blessing.

It is still true that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. The world needs mothers who love the Lord and guide their young in His paths. Mothers have such tremendous burdens and responsibilities. They exert such care and concern, and often without the resources she really needs. Their hearts surely are the biggest in the world. Their children are their prime interest and concern as they serve God. Let us honor them for their work's sake. Pray for each one as they strive to please God and do their duty. When they reach the sunset of life, do not fail to keep them on the pedestal they deserve in your heart. They are among those to whom honor is due. For these reasons we can be glad we have mothers, Mother's Day, and God's teaching concerning mothers.

Possibly we who are Christians need to be busier than we are encouraging young mothers in their role in life. There is no nobler work in the kingdom of God than the kind and molding hand of a mother whose loyalty is to Christ, her husband, and her home.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who commanded us to honor our parents?
2. How can parents make this an easy commandment to obey?
3. How do we honor our parents when we are young?
4. How are we to honor them in later years?

How Can We Improve The Home Front?

In Second Kings we read of the Shunamite woman. When we meet her she had no child and asked the prophet Elisha for a son. A son was born to her and her husband and there was great rejoicing. But tragedy struck the home. The son became ill and died. The woman again went to the prophet for aid. As Elisha saw her coming he sent his servant to meet her and make this inquiry, *“Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? It is well with the child?”* (Second Kings 4:26). These are questions we need to be asking today about our homes.

In America it is all too obvious that in millions of homes all is not well. While great optimism may be evident at the marriage altar and the doors of a “heaven on earth” seem to await, the new relationship often turns into the gateway of an earthly hell. The forces against the family and sanctity of marriage have taken a deadly toll from society. When you marry the right person there is nothing more wonderful. When you marry the wrong person, often for the wrong reasons, there are few things worse and sorrow follows.

One of four, and in some localities one of two, marriages are ending in divorce. Our divorce rate is higher than in any nation on earth. Hundreds of thousands of youths are torn apart from their parents because of divorce. Millions are living with one parent because of the breakdown of the home. I have never seen nor heard of so much divorce even among members of the church. Furthermore, even where divorce does not occur, many homes are unhappy, maladjusted and miserable with the accompanying unfaithfulness, conflict and frustrated children.

A Corrupt View

Too many have viewed marriage through the eyes of degenerate Hollywood and the trashy magazines so abundant in our society. These are loveless, selfish, sex-obsessed relationships without the spiritual emphasis and God-given purposes of marriage even being considered, let alone respected. America is bombarded with the advice from the prominent and popular figures who have made miserable failures of their own marriages. There are even elements that seek the dissolution of marriage and the home, promoting free-love communes and the acceptance of all forms of sexual perversions and violations of the will of God. How much wiser and more successful marriages would be if those involved paid attention to the Designer and Originator of the relationship.

Our homes must be improved if our freedoms and society shall stand. Nineteen of twenty-two civilizations of the past had already crumbled before they reached the low level of home disintegration already evident in our nation. Does this not concern you? The breakdown of the home precedes every fall because the home is to exercise influence in molding the coming generations. When the home is not as it should be, neither will society be as it ought to be. You cannot sow to the flesh and reap life. How can we improve the quality of homes in America, even among those in the church?

A Spiritual Tragedy

Seeing the disasters of failure, we must recognize this failure as a social, but more significantly, a self-imposed spiritual disease and seek the proper medicine. Solutions proposed by men have never succeeded. The corrections needed are sometimes hard to take, but considering the alternatives, we would be wise to hasten to take what we need. So many pulpits bemoan symptoms of home failure but refuse to come to grips with the real problems. Because of preachers fearful of offending the sinful, the remedy given by the Lord is most often unheard, and even less often heeded. Too much preaching is as one described it, “Yo preaching,” meaning a combination of yes and no, take it any way you want. One would think that those who are serious regarding the marital problems and family destruction would want something better than the insipid mouthing of social manipulators, social workers, sociologists of atheistic bent and men who promote their philosophies of “wisdom” rather than the way of divine wisdom.

Marry a Christian

The first suggestion for improvement we make is for Christians to marry those of like precious faith. This is to avoid a multiplicity of problems before they ever arise. So many leave the Lord in favor of their mate when they do not consider the Lord in selecting their mate. Leaders in every religion warn against mixed marriages because such a divided position on such serious matters inescapably produces problems. Frankly, it is frustrating and aggravating to have people totally ignore this sound wisdom, then in a few years come crying to you to help them out of the mess they are in regarding their mate. What can one do when people fly into the face of truth and reason? Indeed, “*The way of the transgressor is hard,*” but convincing people of that is not easily done. They have seen their parents do it and some way, somehow think the division they have witnessed in the home will escape them. They act like stubborn fools and with parental encouragement.

Second Corinthians 6:14-18 teaches against relationships that are incompatible with being a Christian. This is not only applicable to marriage but to all relationships. But listening to this divine teaching would certainly include the closest human relationship in life, that of husband and wife. How can a Christian expect to have Christ in the home when the mate is not even a Christian? The marriage that God approves includes a man, a woman, and Christ. Why do people not consider the Lord when selecting a mate? What of the effect and influence on children that may be born into that home? Where is the common principle and basis of truth upon which decisions shall be made when the Lord is left out? There are fifty times less divorces among those who marry those of like faith than otherwise when both are active and together in the faith.

Women in the Home

I can hear the wail and cry from fools from every quarter when such is even suggested. The point is not taken very well on our disintegrating society but it cannot be repealed and the fruit of its opposite is destroying us. Women must return to putting the home before their personal careers in the world. It is not male chauvinism but the Bible

that teaches the woman is to guide the house, love and take care of her family, place her work as a wife and mother before other things (Titus 2:4,5; First Timothy 5:14; Proverbs 31). The “smart alecks” of our time think God is out-of-date. But that simply shows what fools they are. While the world favors monetary gain, recognition, material advancement, these things are sought at the sacrifice of the home. Wives, husbands and children are paying for it in a tragic way. Whether a woman works outside the home is not the full issue. So often her choice is based on selfishness rather than sacrifice. Is it because of need, or greed, that has taken mothers from their children, brought them into flirtatious encounters in the world, weakening the moral fibre of the home? It is impossible to ignore the increase of juvenile delinquency, child neglect, unattended children, child abuse, and disrupted marriages and related tragedies with the increase of the wives and mothers leaving their primary work as God has assigned it to pursue their selfish and worldly ambitions. Would to God such people could not even physically have children! They do not deserve them. Some even kill them in the womb rather than carry them to birth. What vicious servants of the devil they show themselves to be. With the number one cause of wayward children being parental neglect, how can one successfully argue against God’s will? Society may be pushing women into more and more competition with men in areas she does not belong and urging her to abandon the areas where she is especially suited, but godly women push back. Whatever be the cause bringing this travesty upon society, nobody who is honest and fair with the facts can argue with the corresponding and disastrous effects on the home.

There is no career for women that surpasses that high calling of guiding the house, homemaker, caring and attending for the family, providing security, love, a sense of belonging and identity that the mother in the home can give and the mother away from the home cannot provide. While the world places glamour, praise, money on the pedestal, this is foreign to God’s intent. If the women returned to the home the families would be happier, ample jobs would be available for provisions, lawlessness would decrease, children would be better guided, the nation more stable and the homes far richer than the money brought in at such sacrifice of what really counts. The home’s physical gain is often made at the sacrifice of its spiritual welfare.

Morality

There must be the return to the Lord’s standards of purity. God condemns fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, and all other forms of illicit sexual conduct. When God says “*thou shalt*” and “*thou shalt not*,” there is no room for rationalism to the contrary. The educated fools of our day have led people to believe the “new morality” of old degeneracy is the way and look what it has produced for us all! What many casually call “affairs” are nothing more than sin that damns. The immorality of America is rampant.

Some years ago I heard a television panel composed of a Protestant clergyman, a Jewish rabbi and a Catholic priest discussing America’s morality. They were at odds on many points, but in agreement on one. They all considered the Biblical standard of morals out of fashion for our age. These theological servants of hell were undermining the only thing that kept things decent. They could offer nothing whatever to check the advance of the moral decline and the attendant diseases and evils in its wake. Our universities operating at state expense are too often nothing more than state-financed

brothels where the student is taught there is no right and wrong about sexual conduct. Why the fruits of this hideous philosophy does not impress these “wise men” is beyond comprehension. The diseases, malformed children, insecurities, mental breakdown, divorces, etc. that are produced seem to have no place in the concerns of these “experts” as they ponder the theme of morality. This is quite a contrast to the law of our loving Lord.

The law of Christ teaches no sexual union outside of marriage or before marriage, and absolute faithfulness in marriage. Variance from this is sin and God holds the sinner guilty. To use premarital sex as a “proof of love” is to lie with abandon. How could one really love another and encourage and participate with them in that which damns the souls of both of them? That is love? Can you not see how spiritually sick are the minds of many even regarding love? It is not love, but lust. Only the application of God’s rule of conduct will deal properly with the moral malady besetting our land.

Strong Fathers

There must be the return to the strong father in the home. The husband is to be the head (Ephesians 5:23). Something is wrong when that is not the case. Either the man is weak and unwilling to assume his responsibilities, which is not manly, or the woman is dominant, unwilling to subject herself to her husband, which is a sorry demonstration of womanhood, but more like a demonstration that all the Jezebels are not dead. Usually, both share in the blame when there is not a strong father in the home.

There is no such thing as the husband being superior or the wife superior. Each is superior in his or her realm. But each is a source of stress and malfunction when outside of their realm. One of the finest things that was ever said in the Bible of any man was said of Abraham, Genesis 18:19, *“He will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.”*

Spiritual Emphasis

There must be the spiritual emphasis in the home. It may sound trite but it is true. Families that pray together, usually stay together. This summarizes the usefulness of being spiritually active in the home. One study has shown that ninety-five per cent of the divorces that do occur do so in homes where one or both did not attend worship. In homes of church going families, one of fifty-seven still suffer divorce. But what a difference! That figure doubtless is not so encouraging today as when the survey was made because there has been such an increase in divorces even among church people who have followed the ways of the world more than the way of Christ. We now even have a deluge of false doctrines trying to accommodate adultery and sinful so-called marriages so people can “do their own thing” and still be considered respectable, even among brethren. The Lord’s wrath shall ultimately be poured out on such teachers and those who follow their sinister doctrines. Such false teaching only encourages more home destruction.

A person has no more right to destroy the home than he does to destroy the church, assuming the home is acceptable to God. They both have come from the mind of God. But to leave God out of the home is cut away the very heart of it. A home that fails to honor God, His Son, His church, His Word, can never expect to reap the rich reward of

spiritual success God intends. The home is even a greater spiritual influence, especially on the young, than the church. The home can support or tear down the efforts made by the church regarding spiritual matters. The home, the spring from which all else comes, when polluted, pollutes everything else. To make matters better, we must concentrate on the improvement of the spring.

We cannot turn our backs on these principles and expect improvement. If we will give heed to them, teach them, insist upon them among brethren, we shall be blessed. The place to begin is your home, my home, and try to influence all homes in God's direction.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. From what account is the following quotation taken? "Is it well with thee?"
2. What way is marriage too often wrongfully viewed?
3. What is affected when the home is not as it ought to be?
4. What is the primary role of women in the home?
5. What is the role of the man in the home?
6. What is God's standard of morality as pertains to marriage?
7. To improve the home, what special emphasis must be made?
8. How is this done?

How Shall the Young Secure Their Hearts?

We confront many questions, but few more serious than the one of this lesson. Some questions deal with trivial things and can be easily answered and even if answered incorrectly, the matter is not overly serious. Other questions are more difficult and far-reaching. The answers are not only of temporal concern, but eternal consequence. Such is the question regarding the young.

It is not sufficient to find the answer for just one generation, but something that will be applicable for every generation of youth. We ought not think that the answer varies from one generation to the next, but we must be impressed that every generation must have God's answer.

Why is this such an important matter? To secure means to make confident, free from doubt and fear, to provide comfort and certainty so there can be stability. This is so needful because the devil and all of his forces and agents are busy trying to destroy the souls of the young. If they cannot be secured, they can be destroyed. If those who can assist the young to secure their hearts do not do it, Satan shall see to it that they shall be overcome. When the young person is your child you can see the seriousness of it all the more.

There are those who are intent on destroying faith in God and the Bible as His Word. They plant doubt and constantly sow seeds of confusion in order to uproot confidence. Satan wishes to undermine the foundation for life that God prescribes in order to prevent the person from fulfilling his mission and purpose in life. The forces of evil seek the instability and uncertainty in the hearts of people because that kind of heart is ripe for the sowing of the seeds of temptation that produces sin.

The Right Foundation

Neither the old or the young can build on a foundation of sand and withstand the inevitable challenges that come in life. They will become *"like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed"* (James 1:6). Paul urged his brethren to strive for perfection and told them why, *"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive"* (Ephesians 4:14). Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica to work among the brethren *"to establish you, and comfort you concerning your faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions"* (First Thessalonians 3:2,3). The need of stability is repeated over and over.

We are taught to be secure and steadfast in order to receive the eternal blessings of God. First Corinthians 15:58, *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."* In a world overrun with confusion, threats, violence, hate and skepticism, where material things of life are proved to be unstable and temporary, with pressures to do evil pounding upon us on every turn, young people need

an anchor for the soul that is sure and steadfast, or else they will perish with the wickedness of the world. Sin destroys, and the young must be equipped to guard against it, avoid it, prevent it, and if overcome by it, seek forgiveness that God has provided. This is a most crucial matter and we must come to grips with it.

A Secure Heart

The heart of the youth must be made secure. No person, young or old, is going to continue to do wrong, but will seek that which is right, when from within comes the determination to do right. In the early years of life parents are able to restrict, restrain and control the child from much evil. This they ought to do. But the time soon comes that parental restraint is not sufficient because the child must gradually assume responsibility for his own actions. He will soon be outside the watchful eye of parents. He must do right because he knows to do right and wants to do right. A person must learn to discipline himself. Inasmuch as behavior stems from the heart, when the heart is made secure, and is on guard against sin, then the life is secure. The securing of the heart does not just happen, however. There is no magic formula and it cannot be done by mere wishful thinking and hoping. Nor will it likely to be done by the young person left to stand totally for himself. It takes the combined effort of parent and child working together. Even though it begins entirely with the parents, gradually, but certainly, it will continue as the child learns to control himself.

Parents

We want to suggest four efforts by which the heart of the young can be made secure. First, the parent must provide guidance. Fathers and mothers must set the standards by word and example. *"Train up a child in the way he should go..."* is directed primarily toward parents (Proverbs 22:6). *"Fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"* (Ephesians 6:4). *"He that spareth his rod, hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him be times"* (Proverbs 13:24). The level and content of guidance to be given the child is determined from the Word of God.

By proper instruction, showing the good, restraining the evil, with love, consideration, provision, discipline, and chastisement, the older is to guide the younger. By example, which is more powerful than words, the child can formulate his values and his concept of right and wrong as well as his duties and privileges of life. When word and example are lacking, or misdirected, the child's heart is not likely to ever be secure regarding that which is most important to him. The devil will move in and lead that precious youth into a life that eventually leads him to hell.

Responsibility

Second, there comes the time when the child must assume more and more responsibility for his own life. He must do his own study (Second Timothy 2:15), and not be content to live according to a borrowed faith, a faith accepted just because somebody told him what to believe. When a young person has convictions that are true to God's Word his convictions will be like those of his parents, provided their convictions are true

to God's Word. This idea that the young must necessarily have a different view from his foreparents is fallacious. But one must know the truth because he knows the truth from the source of truth.

There are many things others can do for another. There are things we can help each other to do. But there are some things each one must do for himself. Young people must learn the truth of the Bible, give heed to the revelation therein, exert their own effort to know and do the will of God. As they gradually assume greater freedom and independence from parents, a mark of real maturity is that they accept this responsibility with seriousness. The combination of parental guidance and the acceptance by the youth of his own responsibility will contribute to securing the heart of the young.

Companions

A third area where it takes combined effort of parent and child cooperation is in the associations of the young. Many young people are led into evil ways by the influence of their peers. Too often, not having reached sufficient maturity to make up their own minds properly and follow the right ways, for fear of being excluded, they will follow the crowd, going places, doing things, saying things that they think will make them acceptable by their associates, but are damaging to their spiritual welfare.

In view of this reality, it is startling to see how indifferent some parents are in what they allow their children to do in cultivating friends and associates. Little wonder that some young people seek the world before they seek the Lord. All of their friends act that way. We are so inclined to blame the faults of our children on their friends, but have we given proper consideration of our own permissiveness relating to whom they have as friends? It is essential that people develop the right kind of friends.

First Corinthians 15:33, *"Be not deceived; evil companionships corrupt good morals"* (ASV). Proverbs 13:20, *"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."* Proverbs 28:7, *"He that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father."* In the song where we admonish each other to "yield not to temptation," we sing a phrase, "shun evil companions." We sing, "Take time to be holy," and urge one another to "make friends of God's children." The kind of people whose close association we cultivate will have an influence on us. For this reason parents and youth need to be very cautious in the selection of friends. There is value in situations where Christian association can be nurtured. Friends can help or hinder one in his Christian life.

Opportunity

Fourth, our young must be given opportunity to apply Christianity in their lives now. They should be encouraged to abstain from the evil, but they must be encouraged to do the positive good that is expected of a child of God. Sometimes people speak of the young as the church of tomorrow. Many young people are already a part of the church of today. They must be taught to exercise their sense of right and wrong as they have learned from Scripture. Decisions must be made by them to the extent they are capable. The ability to discern between right and wrong is gradually developed with growth like every other part of Christianity. Learning to serve, to give of oneself for others, to be included in the work and worship of the body, are things that must be provided for the

young. They will not likely push themselves in such things, but may well have to be pushed. But it is the duty of the older to see that they have this opportunity. Only then can they grow to be like Jesus who went about doing as well as saying good.

The way of youth often is very frustrating to both young and older. This has been true with every generation, and it will continue to be true. But God, through His Word, has revealed to us how the young must secure their hearts, and how it can be accomplished. When there is the right combination of proper parental oversight, with the youths gradually assuming their place and duty, the church teaching and encouraging everyone in the way they should walk, the young will grow strong in the Lord and be able to resist the devil who would harm them, now and forever.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What do we mean when we speak of securing the hearts of the young?
2. Why is it so important to have a firm foundation?
3. How would you describe a secure heart?
4. Whose duty is it to secure their hearts?

How to Keep Our Children Faithful

The Holy Spirit guided John the apostle to write the short epistle of Third John to Gaius about whom reports had come to John how Gaius walked in truth. Then John added, *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth”* (verse 4). John was speaking of those he had taught and brought to Christ. But who is not concerned about their own beloved and dear children? What people on earth would we be more interested in being faithful to God and on their way to heaven than our blessed children?

Our lesson on how to keep our children faithful is not to present a checklist where you do one thing, then the second, then the third, etc., like the directions you might follow in putting a piece of equipment together. There are many elements that are involved in rearing children properly, but you do not do one thing, set that aside, and then do the next. These many elements have to be done in concert, brought along together as a combination, in proper balance, with a mixing and blending of all pieces. Like growth, everything grows at the same time.

We have our children but a few precious years at the longest. We soon learn that the years go swiftly by, and soon, before we realize it, our children reach maturity and are gone from our daily guidance. We have but one opportunity to provide for them what is our duty to provide. If we miss that window of opportunity it does not return.

We Begin Before They Do

God intends children to be born of parents who are married to each other. God also wants children to be reared in homes where Christ reigns supreme. You should consider the possibility of your children in the selection of the one you marry. So that your home can be one where the will of the Lord is the guiding force and marry a Christian. How can the Lord rule when either the husband or wife, father or mother, is not a child of God? A divided home in the matters of greatest importance presents a serious handicap to children.

We Really Cannot Do It

It may seem strange in a lesson that teaches how to keep your children faithful to have to admit at the very start that we cannot do it. Even God does not keep His children faithful, that is, without the cooperation of the children. So it is with us and our children. We cannot obey the gospel for them, nor, once they have obeyed, can we be faithful for them. They must keep themselves faithful. We may help or we may hinder. Some are faithful in spite of their parents, and some are unfaithful in spite of godly parents. Some have been blessed to have had parents that assisted them to be faithful. But the bottom line is that each child is answerable to God for himself or herself.

Proverbs 22:6

“Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” This passage places emphasis on parental responsibility in the upbringing of children, but it is also frequently misunderstood to imply the entire matter rests with the parent. That is not so. The passage presents three stages in the life of the child, two explicitly, and one implicitly.

There is the youthful stage when the parent must train. There are the older years when the child has matured to old age and holds firm to his convictions. But there are also the middle years, years in which the child must walk the way he has been trained. Whether they do that or not is their responsibility.

This being true, to keep our children faithful we must teach our children they are responsible before God. Standing before the judgment seat of Christ (Second Corinthians 5:10) includes them. Giving an account (Romans 14:12) includes them. They will answer for their own words, deeds, and know the consequences.

Therefore, they must make their own decisions about living God’s way. We would not want them to have a borrowed faith, that is, believing just because we believed. We want them to have their own deep-seated convictions that will guide them after we are gone. Otherwise, they will never be strong and stable.

Having their own faith does not mean having a faith that differs from our faith. When the parent follows the truth, and the child follows the truth, they will follow the same thing. But each is following the Lord for himself. It is the parent’s duty to give them the basis for making their decisions.

Emphasizing how we must teach them to bear their own responsibility does not lessen or minimize parental duty. Ephesians 6:4, *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”* This underscores an essential truth that both parent and child must accept.

Children must learn that the parent is doing what God expects the parent to do when the parent teaches, guides, disciplines and instructs the child. The child must learn his parent is doing what is done in the best interest of the child and the child must submit to that arrangement as God’s will. Parents must launch the children on to the sea of life as fully prepared as they can make them.

Rearing children is somewhat like a coiled spring. When the child is born the spring is pressed beneath the hand of the parent and under the control. In time, the hand necessarily must be removed from the suppressed spring. Will it be removed at one bound and quickly, only to see the spring lunge in most any direction? Or will the hand be lifted slowly, and when removed, to see the spring stand just where it is supposed to stand? The time is coming when our hand will be lifted, our training time will be over, and the child will stand or fall. Consider what we must do that they may stand.

We have mentioned two matters of importance already: (1) Select a Christian for a mate and (2) teach them personal responsibility to God.

Teach Them of God

In the course of the child’s life his faith in God will be challenged. It is the duty of father and mother to teach the child of the existence of God and the evidences of His existence. He has left His footprints in nature (Romans 1:20). God is the Creator,

Provider, Sustainer, Judge, and Authority. The child must learn that God is powerful, a God of love, grace, mercy, but also a God of justice, wrath, and holiness.

We sing, “There’s an all-seeing eye watching you.” God should not be presented as one who watches in order to catch someone in a fault. To be sure, He is aware of all sin. But, thankfully, God watches over us as a mother watches over the child; not to find fault, to punish, to scold, but to protect, provide, supply the needs. Psalm 33:18, “*Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.*”

God hates every false way (Psalm 119:104). He provides for the godly (Psalm 37:25). Our children need to know of the terror of the Lord (Second Corinthians 5:11), and the goodness and severity of God (Romans 11:22). How else will they come to respect God unless they have a knowledge of His nature? If your child learns about God it is up to you to see to it.

Must Know God’s Will

The Jews were commanded to keep their law before their children. Our children must know of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, concerning Christ, the plan of salvation, the way to worship, what godly living involves, about the church or kingdom. How else will they come to know right from wrong unless taught? How else will they know what God expects, approves, and disapproves unless you teach them? That is the parental duty. We are concerned, rightly so, about the education of our children, but education in what? Will they be educated in what matters most? Will they know the great Biblical accounts of the servants of God, the events that have framed the scheme of redemption, the revelation of things holy and sacred? Not unless parents teach them.

Give Them Self-Esteem

Children need to appreciate their worth, not by some “hyped up pep talk.” When I was young and played sports my father was always supportive and encouraging to me. But he never told me I was the best one on the field. I already knew better than that, and he would have lost credibility to have said that to me. But he urged me to always do the best that I could do.

The child is taught self-esteem when they are taught they are created in the spiritual image of God. Herein lies the dignity of human being and the value of the individual. Here is the basis for the sacredness of life and personal worth. Therefore, we and our children are distinctive from all else that God created. They matter and they must know they matter because this life is not all there is to their existence. They matter to God and they matter to you because they count. Each child is worth more than all the world because each is a precious soul (Matthew 16:26). This cannot be accomplished by degrading them, humiliating them, constantly finding fault with them, yelling at them. They have a quality like God. He is Spirit (John 4:24), and they are spirits as well as physical bodies.

Don’t Let This Disappoint You

A hard fact of life is that you will not be the first perfect parent. Furthermore, you will not have perfect children. (That does not come until grandchildren!). So ease up on

yourself just a bit and try to relax. The “wise experts” on child-rearing in our day would have you believe that every single little matter that comes along is necessarily momentous and a life-determining situation. That is not so. There will be times when you will make mistakes, say the wrong things, react the wrong way. But much of that will be covered when your child knows you love him, you seek to provide for him, and care for him.

Do not refuse to apologize even to a child when you have done wrong or mishandled a situation. Children are not little adults, and should not be expected to act like adults. (Neither should adults act like children!). Remember, children have feelings, too. They are not to be badgered about with harsh words, cutting remarks, jerked about. You can hear some of the most awful things come from parents yelling at their children at little league games. How uncalled for!

The little fellows must be trained, corrected, disciplined, but they must also be treated with respect. It is hard for them to grow from a life of idealism into the world of realism where they learn everyone is not good, where every policeman is not honest, where every Christian is not pure, where every teacher is not fair, where you are not perfect as they seem to think when they are small. Don't make it harder on them and destroy your communication with them by being overbearing, dictatorial and abusive.

From You They Learn to Respect Authority

Respect for authority, or the lack of respect, is learned in the home more than anywhere else. Parents are not just another friend to their children but they are parents, the authority of the home, and deserve respect and to be obeyed (Ephesians 6:1). You can be a friend and a parent at the same time, but never to the disposal of your parental position.

One day I was in my truck with one of my grandsons. James had a little run-in with some playmate, and evidently retaliated somewhat, which is unlike his character. But I told him that he was to return good for evil. He looked up at me and said with skepticism, "Who made that rule?" I told him that was God's rule. Then he said, "Well, that makes a difference!" He was showing signs of having learned to respect authority.

Example, Word, and Deed

Deeds speak louder than words (James 2:18). Our words are drowned out by our deeds unless they are consistent with each other. One of the greatest memories a parent can give a child is a parent who was trying to live faithfully to his words, being fair, truthful, honest, loving, dedicated to what was right. We only create confusion in their developing minds when they hear us say one thing but see us doing the opposite.

Referring again to James on that same day, a car passed us and James asked, "Paw Paw, did you see that man in that car?" I noticed him but not much. I asked what caught his eye. He said, "He was smoking. My Daddy says it is wrong to smoke." I told him his Daddy was absolutely correct. Then he said, "And my Daddy doesn't smoke either." Now what good would it have done for that child to be told it was wrong to smoke but see his Daddy smoke?

Another grandson was riding home from pre-school with a friend and the friend's grandfather was driving, and smoking. Daniel said, "Your car stinks. When are you going

to quit smoking?" Not bad for five years old, was it?

We must set the right example regarding the church. Take them, don't send them to Bible school. One little boy asked his Father, "How old must I be before I can stay home from Sunday school like you?" What an example! Is it right to expect them to be what you do not even try to be? Do you know why some children have bad manners, are rude, use bad speech, show bad attitudes? Look at their parents. Do you know why some children have good manners, good speech and attitudes? Look at their parents. You cannot lead where you will not go! Dad once told me I could do what I saw him do. Quite a responsibility he took on himself, but that is the responsibility of a good parent.

First Things First

Matthew 6:33, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness....*" We, as parents, must set the right priorities before our young so they will know what matters most. Unfortunately, not every child learns the proper priorities from home. The church must come before self, the world, pleasure, sports, friends. Family must come before peers, morality before lust, honesty before gain, worship before trips, visits, vacations, etc. School lessons are important but not as important as Bible lessons. Conviction surpasses convenience. What do you expect of them when they have been taught at home, shown time and again, that the things God wants for them is of less concern than other things? They may get mixed signals. For instance, one child asked her Mother, "Why do they always cancel church when we have company?"

Children glory to see their own parents participating in worship services, teaching classes, helping in the overall work. Without a word, they learn what matters to their parents and then it matters to them. I can never forget my Mother preparing the Lord's Table, making the bread, and being involved in the work and worship of the church.

I recall as a small boy when the little church where we attended replaced the hand-fed coal stove in the basement with an automatic stoker feed. But one cold Saturday the thing went out. I went with my Dad and brother Bullington, the janitor, to fix it for Sunday. I was a big help because I held the flashlight. But I also learned what was of interest and concern to my Dad, and brother Bullington. It was the church and its welfare. That stays with you.

What Are You Teaching About Worship?

You know the hours of worship and they soon know them. Do they also know that their family will always respect them? You should not have to decide each time whether you are going to worship. That ought already be decided. You don't decide each day whether school matters, or work matters. Why should it ever be questioned whether worship matters enough to attend?

Good habits can be learned just like bad habits. It may be difficult, especially for young parents, to gather up their children, get them ready, wrestle with them during services, but it pays dividends in the long run. They learn to respect things holy and pick up thoughts and impressions far more than we ever imagine.

Some have been heard to complain, "My parents made me go when I was young, now I don't go." Their parents probably made them wash the face, brush the teeth, eat their food, etc., but they still do it. Along with "making them go," teach them it is not a

mere duty and obligation, but a privilege to show God appreciation for His goodness toward them. Develop within them a loving attitude for serving God, making it more than a demand, even though He does demand It. It is a blessing! We become like that which we worship. Teach them to want to become more and more like God in their ways. That will help keep them faithful.

Do You Know Who Their Friends Are?

One area of concern to every responsible parent is the company their children keep. "*Evil companions corrupt good morals*" (First Corinthians 15:33. ASV). Teach them to "make friends of God's children." Sometimes we are disappointed even with children they meet at church. Let us learn, what our children do and where they go is not just our business. When it influences other children it becomes other's business as well, and vice versa. Every parent ought keep his children so they will be a good influence on other children, and assist other children of Christian families to keep right. Peer pressure is important. How sad when young people "from church" are found saying and doing things contrary to Christianity and thereby being a bad influence on other Christian young people. It is the parents' work to make sure that does not happen.

Send them to good Christian camps in the summer, provide for Christian association with activities centered around the church, make your home a place where their friends are welcome. Watch out for their schools events, their books, teachers, subjects studied and their progress. Supervise their entertainment about television. Why invite profanity, immorality, vulgarity and degeneracy into your living room? Don't you care what you children absorb?

I once received a call from a person who had moved into the community who asked if we had a youth director to direct trips to Six Flags, play games, have parties, etc. I told him we had about a hundred such directors, but we called them parents. This is not the work of the church, but the work of the home, and parents must be about the Father's business of attending to their home work. So many times today the children are being guided by people other than their own parents. You cannot shift that duty to other people even though others may help.

Be Careful How You Criticize the Church

We want our children to love the church. This is a part of staying faithful. But some never find anything right with the church. There is the divine side of the church that never needs improvement because God's part of it is perfect. There will always be shortfalls in the behavior of members because we are not a perfect people, but we keep trying. Some complain, grumble, find fault and criticize most everything and everybody about the church and then wonder why their children have so little respect for it. The elders don't handle this right, the preacher is dry and dull, the song leader gets the songs too high, too low, he is too loud, too soft, makes poor selections, the members are a bunch of hypocrites, the most unfriendly people in town, pick, pick, pick, pick. One Sunday a family planned to have the preacher for dinner and the little boy told the preacher he knew what they were having for dinner. He said they would have buzzard because he heard his mother say they had to have that old buzzard for dinner today. Just how will that child see the church as he grows up? As one boy said to his Dad, "Why

don't you ask to preach next Sunday since you know how it ought to be done?"

It is fashionable among some, not only to find fault with members which can always be found, but now find fault with God's design of the church, the worship services (they are called dull and boring even though they are according to God's pattern). Bashing the church is the ministry of some. As my mother used to say, "Little bears have big ears," and children hear such things and form attitudes accordingly. Then we ask why they are not favorably impressed with the church!

Troubles between members sometimes arise. That is not totally new. If such be the case with you, be extremely careful what you say about another member. Harsh words, cutting statements and accusations might mar the mind of your child if you display your anger and vengeance. It has been known for children to see members point their fingers and shout in the face of others venting their anger when differences arise. I have seen and heard this as a child and it puzzled me then.

We Must Not Compromise the Truth

Everyone knew where my Dad stood and why, and they knew he would stand. We learned that early. The truth is what counts. To sacrifice truth for unity and peace is treason. How unwarranted it is for the home to undercut the church or the church to undercut the home. But this too often happens, especially in such matters as drinking alcoholic beverages, the modern dance, immodest clothing, teaching about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. The home and church should present a united front in these matters. It creates a conflict for the child and divides his loyalty if unity is not the case.

When error raises its head, we must stand for the truth, kindly but firmly. We must be found on the Lord's side without compromise, fear or favor. We must defend the gospel. Only in this way will our children learn that truth is not negotiable. Unity must be founded on truth, otherwise, we lose our reason to exist. "*Stand fast in the faith*" must be one of our watchwords. We cannot choose what may be the easy or most popular way, but the way that is right. When you do that, at least in this matter, you have done your part.

Be Ready to Give Answer

Children can ask more questions, but by them they learn. It is the work of parents to provide correct answers. If you do not know the answer, do not try to pretend you do because they will eventually see through you. When you do not know, say so, but do not leave it there. Tell them you will find the answer together. Do not leave them to others to provide the answers to questions they ask. You may not know what might be planted in their minds. It is your job first. Do it. They have the right to ask and you have the task to answer.

Some questions are really puzzling, such as when one of our children asked his mother, "Why did God make poison ivy?" Try to handle that one.

You might have to postpone the answer to some questions, such as a six year old asking if he can be baptized. You may have heard of the father who told his boy that he wanted to talk to him about where babies came from. The boy answered, "All right, Dad. What do you want to know?"

To be able to answer their questions about the soul, God, church, truth, you must study. Study for your own sake, but for their sake as well. Provide for them sound literature to read and encourage them to study. Have good source material in the home available to them.

The Value of a Strong Home

We cannot overstate the value of a strong heritage, where home is a haven, a place of security and love. Home is where it is always safe. Regardless of what befalls them at school, church, in the world, on the field, they know home is the place to go.

One of the greatest gifts that parents can give children is that their children know their parents love each other, are faithful to each other, and that the prime goal of marriage and the home is that every member goes to heaven.

Some children do not know how a home ought to be, never having been in one that operates as God would have it. Children deserve their mother's time. Even though society draws mothers from the home and from their children, nothing and nobody provides the strength, security and care for children like a godly mother. Sometimes necessity calls the mother from the home, but make sure it is because of need, not greed. Faithful children, a good parent-child relationship, is worth more than the material gain this world affords.

It May Not Always Work

Sadly, not all children respond to even this serious approach to their rearing. But usually such children will never turn against their parents or what their parents stand for, but they will uphold the same eternal and fundamental principles they have learned at home. Parents have been frustrated and wondered why some of their children are faithful and others are not. "I treated them just alike," they are heard to say. That may be the problem. They are not just alike. They even come into the family under different circumstances. They must be treated as individuals.

It is sometimes said the church is losing so many of her young people. It is true that many young people forsake the church. But the loss is not because of the church but because of the failure in the home. As goes the home, so goes everything else, including the church. The church does suffer loss, however.

Prayer

We shall not succeed without the cooperation of our children. Nor shall we succeed if we try to do our part without God. If we be in Christ we have the privilege of the avenue of prayer. We need God's help, and He is a help. We are assured of God's providence. We should pray for our children.

Never a day passes that I do not take the name of every one of my children and grandchildren before the throne of Almighty God, beseeching Him to watch over them, protect them by His providence, asking that they might always be faithful. This is one of the most important things I can do on their behalf. Prayer is our way to communicate with God, and God hears, and will answer according to that which is best for us. Even our prayers must be according to His will, and our expectation of answers cannot be contrary to His will.

When we do these things, and other efforts could be mentioned, and do them persistently, patiently, consistently, faithfully, we will know the reward of faithful children. Then we will have possibly the greatest blessing we can have in this life, and be able to say along with John, *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”*

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. When should we begin this task of keeping our children faithful?
2. Why do we say we really cannot keep them faithful?
3. What three stages of life does Proverbs 22:6 include?
4. What is a “borrowed faith?”
5. Who is ultimately accountable for our child’s faithfulness?
6. Name some benefits that parents can provide that will help.
7. What big mistake do many parents make in their treatment of children?
8. What is the basis for genuine self-esteem?
9. Where do children learn respect for authority?
10. What are some practical applications of putting first things first?
11. How can criticism of the church damage the child?
12. What role does prayer have in keeping our children faithful?

How to Treat Children and Parents

Family relationships are so important to right thinking people. The family and home is the basic unit of society. Usually, when things are not right at home, they are not right anywhere. We witness two extremes people have toward kinfolk. There is either great partiality (the “blood thicker than water” attitude), and the other quite the opposite. With some, they treat their family worse than they would anybody else on earth. But who is dearer to us than our children and our parents? We can add to this the love we have for faithful brethren.

Jesus taught that our spiritual relationship to Him is far more precious than even family relationships. Matthew 12:46-50, “*While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*” Christ before family and spiritual kinship before physical kinship is also taught in Matthew 10:34-39. But without question, the family has a special place in the heart.

About Your Children

Are you not impressed how much and how strongly the Scripture teaches about love for children? The relationship between God and the redeemed is pictured as a father-child relationship. God always has admonished care for widows and children, and forbade that they ever be oppressed. Jesus even compared those in the kingdom to be as children. There are strong words underscoring parental responsibility in rearing children in both the Old and New Testaments. God has a special concern for children.

Treat as Children

Children should be treated as children, not simply small adults. First Corinthians 13:11 shows there is a difference between a child and an adult. We know that, but we do not always show that we know that. Children, by reason of immaturity, lack knowledge, wisdom and experience. They have limited abilities, skills and vocabularies because they are in the early stages of learning. Some seem to expect children to act like adults. Some adults keep acting like children, but it is unfair and unreal to expect children to behave in a mature fashion even as they are being taught to do so.

We must treat them with tender compassion. Psalm 103:13. “*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*” Children are to be considered as gifts from God. Consider the attitude of Samson's parents toward the child that would born unto them (Judges 13:8,12). Psalm 127:3-5. “*Lo, children are a heritage of the*

Lord, and fruit of the womb is his reward.” Eve considered her child as a manchild from God.

Children can be the source of one of life’s greatest joys. Third John 4, *“I have no greater joy than to hear than my children walk in truth.”* There are several matters involved in producing this joy. Much depends on how we treat our children and how children treat parents.

Respect for the Children

We should have respect for our children. They have feelings, too. Some parents scream at their children, yelling, snatching, jerking, physically slapping and knocking at the slightest provocation. Who has not seen little fellows crushed at heart because of the insensitive way some parent treated them? Often this is seen at the ball fields, the grocery stores, etc. We should never abuse them verbally or physically. That’s wrong!

Each One an Individual

We must recognize that each child is a unique person and nobody can fill or take his or her place. It is dangerous to make too much comparison between children because they vary in talents and dispositions. Some are quicker than others to learn. They possess different talents. But each is distinctive and worthy. One mother was trying to find out why one child turned out well but another did not. She said, “I treated them just alike.” That may have been the major cause. They were not alike and should be considered individually.

Without Partiality

Even though they are different we cannot be partial. Some may be easier to rear than others because dispositions differ. There is the real need for the exercise of the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12). You cannot treat a teenager like a pre-schooler, or vice versa. Jacob’s mistake regarding his sons was partiality toward Joseph and it caused hatred from Joseph’s brothers. We must always seek what is best for each child.

Not to Provoke, but to Love

Ephesians 6:4 teaches us not to provoke our children to wrath. Parents can make their children unnecessarily angry. Sometimes we may simply be trying to show them who is boss and we become overbearing. Children who feel crushed and overpowered by arbitrary power learn rebellion and resentment. Provoking the worst from our children is an abuse, not use, of our authority. Seeking their highest good is to show true love. You will not be the perfect parent nor have perfect children, but love covers many mistakes. Women are taught to love their children (Titus 2:4). You do not neglect nor mistreat those you love. A trait of the wicked was being without natural affection (Romans 1:3 1), which means the failure to love even your own flesh and blood. Some “mothers” today have murdered their children, beat them, aborted them, etc. God will not overlook that!

Training

It is the primary duty of parents to train their children. Ephesians 6:4 says to *“bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”* Proverbs 22:6, *“Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”* The training is the parent’s job.

This includes discipline, but that is not just punishment. Discipline means showing the way to go as well as deterring the way not to go. Genesis 18: 19. *“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment...”* You, the parent, are authority. You are more than just another friend. By word and example you have to show and teach them right from wrong, truth from error, righteousness from evil. If we spare the rod (a euphemism for discipline and training), we will spoil the child (Proverb 13:24: 23:13.14: 29:15). Never does the Word of God allow abusing the child.

Eli’s failure, although he was mostly a good man himself, was that he failed to rightly discipline his children (First Samuel 2:12,29). The most frustrated youth alive is the one not trained to know the difference between right and wrong, and are not taught individual responsibility for what they do.

Providing Guidance and Counsel

Children do not always heed good advice and direction. But they have to learn to make decisions and in time will make all of their own decisions. We want it to be that way. But it is the task of parents to provide them standards and a sound basis upon which to stand in making decisions. When they have to decide, without you, will they know how? Will they know why? That is part of the parent’s job of ruling the house. Parents should make it as easy as possible for their children to come to them and receive good counsel and advice.

Encouragement

Life is sometimes overflowing with discouraging things. Our children meet with disappointments also. They must be shown how to deal with them. We should not be the source of discouragement. I have heard parents say to their children, “You never do anything right. Won’t you ever learn anything?” I ate supper at one home and was told by the little boy of four or five, “Daddy says I am a bad boy.” I told him he was not bad. Children may do things that are bad at times, but that does not make them bad children. They soon develop the sense that this is expected of them so they do as expected. Parents should help them succeed, build self-esteem and self-respect, show them their worth, because they are souls and are loved by their parents and by God.

Provide, Protect, Teach to Stand

First Timothy 5:8 and Second Corinthians 12:14 shows we are to provide for our young spiritually as well as physically. How can children get along well if nobody protects them from harm? Moses’ mother cared for him and protected him. Joseph and Mary protected Jesus by taking Him to Egypt. They cannot stand alone. But they must be

taught to stand alone. The time will come when you will not be there to prop them up and them must learn to stand, where to stand, why to stand and how to stand. The time will come when we must turn them loose, and that is not easy to do, but must be done. There are other elements we could justifiably mention, but now turn attention the other direction.

Treating Our Parents

How we treat our parents depends in which stage of our relationship we are. We have different duties as minors than we do when we reach maturity, or when they become dependent upon us as we have been dependent upon them. As minors, we are to love and obey. The child in the home has the duty to conform to the will of the parents. As mature men and women we are to care for and provide for them, especially when they need us.

Honoring parents means to give respect and special consideration (Ephesians 6:2). Children can bring joy and gladness to their parents, or they can bring reproach, sorrow and despair. How can people so live as to hurt their parents who cared for them when they were small? Parents sometimes make bad mistakes, but shall we always be unforgiving and “make them pay” as if their feelings do not matter to us? Third John 4 is something we should provide for our parents to say. We owe them that. Proverbs 23: 24,25 *"The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice, and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice."*

Included in showing respect is to speak kindly of them, doing things that show our love and appreciation. *"Disobedient to parents"* was a mark of the wicked Gentile world (Romans 1:30; Second Timothy 3:2).

As minors we are to obey (Ephesians (6:1), as Jesus was subject to Mary and Joseph while living in Nazareth (Luke 2:52). We must pay attention to their instructions (Proverbs 1:8: 4:1: 23:22).

Showing Gratitude

Parents have to sacrifice so much for their children. They do it from love, but it is sacrifice nonetheless. Be thankful if you had good parents and let them know you are thankful for them. Be sure your children have good parents so they can be thankful for you someday.

The time eventually comes, if all goes normally and as usual, that your parents become aged, if they live. They may be relatively helpless and in need of physical care and assistance Children should provide. *"Requite their parents"* (First Timothy 5:4) means to provide for them. Jesus rebuked some who gave gifts to their faith but neglected caring for their parents (Mark 7:11 13), abiding by their own traditions and making the law of God of none effect.

What you sow, you shall reap (Galatians 6.7.8). This ought to sober children. You need to show your children how to treat parents by the way you treat their grandparents. When the time comes when you must bid them good-bye, and you stand by their coffin and grave, there is great comfort in the knowledge that you treated them properly. God help us treat our children and parents as God would have us treat them.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the physical and spiritual kinship we have.
2. How must children be treated?
3. In what ways can parents make children unnecessarily angry?
4. What are some of the primary functions of parents toward their children?
5. How are children to treat parents when children are young?
6. How are children to treat parents when parents become old?
7. What warning is given in this lesson to children regarding their parents?

Husband And Wife As A Team

You should read Ephesians 5:23-33 before reading this lesson. That text serves as the text for the subject. Many of us consider ourselves most blessed to have been privileged to have the husband/wife team demonstrated before us by our parents. Many of us enjoy this teamship in our own marriages. For this we are grateful beyond expression. It seems that everybody ought to know that the husband and wife are to function as a team.

But it is also obvious, due to the havoc and breakdown found in many marriages, that a lot of people have not learned this fundamental truth. If more were aware of it and worked accordingly, there would not be the destruction of homes so rampant in our society today.

We are discussing an attitude and a matter of the heart. We are also focusing attention on a relationship. We can say that we are studying an attitude of heart that should be demonstrated in a specific relationship.

What is a team? The word is not used in the Bible with reference to marriage even though the concept is there as we shall discover. A team consists of people working together, yoked together, coupled, linked and cooperating for the common good. Webster defines the word and uses marriage to illustrate the meaning.

Different Yokes

The word “yoke” can be understood in terms of a burden or an unbearable load as Paul used it in Second Corinthians 6:14, *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”* Or It can be understood to refer to a beautiful and intimate relationship of favor as Jesus used it in His invitation found in Matthew 11:28-20. *“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

Being yoked in marriage requires agreement. Amos stated the great principle in Amos 3:3, *“Can two walk together except they be agreed?”* Teamwork demands consideration, communication, consultation, cooperation, companionship, and in marriage there must be the inclusion of Christ. Without these essentials the team simply cannot and will not function as its Originator intended.

Originally

It was God’s original and present purpose that the husband and wife function as a team, not separately, but as a complement to each other. Genesis 2:18, *“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”* God did not say that it is wrong to be unmarried. But as it is stated in Proverbs 18:22, *“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord.”*

Marriage is a blessing given to mankind by God. If we could summarize marriage with one word, we would choose the word “companionship.” This is what God intends in marriage.

Several Biblical Phrases Show Teamship

Let us now read Genesis 2:20-25 where there are several phrases that show the teamwork we are considering. *“And Adam gave names to all cattle, and the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”*

This teaching concerning marriage was repeated by Jesus Christ when He gave His will concerning marriage (Matthew 19:1-9). His will is as God planned and designed it from the beginning. All men everywhere are accountable to God through the teaching of Christ in this matter as in all others (John 12:48).

Composition of the Team

Notice the team composed of a husband and wife, not merely a man and a woman, nor a man and women, nor a woman and men, nor a man and man, nor woman and woman. Many have perverted this relationship, such as homosexuals, lesbians, adulterers, fornicators, etc. Of such Paul said that God had given them up to dishonor, vile affections and called them reprobate (Romans 1:24,26,28). While we have pity and concern for those who pervert themselves in any fashion, nobody can claim to be loyal to the doctrine of Christ and pronounce such things as anything other than sin which damns the soul.

Teamwork of husband and wife is seen in the phrase, *“bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”* Understand the context. All the other creatures God had created had passed before Adam and none of them were suitable to be his companion. Nor was it expected that they would be. So God made a special creation for man that was suitable. The phrase, *“this is now,”* literally means, “this turn.” The other creatures had their turn, so to speak, and were found unsuitable. Now it was the woman’s turn, the special creation, and she was created suitable as man’s companion.

Teamship is seen in the phrase, *“one flesh,”* There is a difference in flesh. All flesh is not the same flesh because there is one flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes and another of birds (First Corinthians 15:39). We might add here that this passage, alongside many others, drives a spike through the heart of any attempt to harmonize the Bible with organic evolution, atheistic, theistic, agnostic or whatever. But the point as it relates to our theme is that God made man and woman of the same kind. They were two distinct personalities blended into one satisfying unit for the physical and part of the spiritual needs of both. It is as stated in Proverbs thirty-one, *“He trusts her... He praises her... She will do him good.”* (Verses 11,12,28).

The word “man” is sometimes used in the Bible to refer to the male of the human

family. Sometimes it refers to the whole human family, male and female. The man is the male man, and the woman is the female man. They were not Deity, nor animals, but humanity of the same kind and of one flesh.

The Closest Relationship

This teamship is closer than the tie between parent and child. They were to leave and cleave one to the other. Prime allegiance belongs to each other above even the close tie of parent and child. If parents want to give a great gift to their children that will be of enduring strength for them throughout the life of the child, give them parents who truly love each other before all else this world offers. We are to love our mates first before everything except God. The beautiful truth is that when we love God first we will love our mate above everything else.

Husbands and wives are interdependent on each other. *“For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man. in the Lord. For as the woman is of man, even so is man also by the woman; but all things of God”* (First Corinthians 11:8,9,11,12).

Anti-Marriage

We hear much criticism today against the very institution of marriage. Some complain that in marriage you lose your individuality. We can never completely lose our individuality. We shall stand as individuals before God in the judgment (Second Corinthians 5:10). But in any human relationship, including marriage, there is the sacrifice of some individuality. Why just attack marriage and not all other human associations? This is because many want the physical privileges in marriage without the duties in marriage.

In marriage each is an individual with distinctive roles for which each is especially made to fulfill. We should assist each other in fulfilling these God-given roles in life. Neither is the master of himself or herself, but each seeks the highest good of the unit. This is what “agape” or love embodies and involves.

What it Requires

Teamwork in marriage requires compatibility, companionship, nearness, personal involvement, cooperation, but also Christ. We need to understand that any disposition of marriage that omits God cannot be what marriage is intended to be. There are three involved in marriage, not just a man and a woman. There must be the inclusion of the Designer, Originator and Giver of marriage, who is God. Many problems arise because people fail to understand and accept this. Many problems could be solved, even avoided, if all would respect this fact of truth. False doctrines arise because some have failed to respect both the individual and collective duties each has toward God. Marriage is not merely a social relationship, economic arrangement, or just a legal contract. It is a holy, sacred, God-given relationship. Without God in marriage it is lacking in a basic fundamental ingredient.

This attitude of teamwork must manifest itself in a number of areas. Husbands

and wives are like a lock and key, or two blades of scissors. They cannot and do not function properly by themselves.

There is teamwork in the conjugal or sexual relationship. Paul wrote, *“Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband”* (First Corinthians 7:2). This “added language” of love, the expression of love, the satisfaction of pure and holy emotions and desires within marriage is reserved for the members of the team. Outside of marriage it is an abominable transgression against God, society, one’s mate, self and family.

There should be teamwork in the rearing of children. Genesis 1:28 tells us that God blessed THEM and said to THEM to be fruitful and replenish the earth. Both have a duty, not only in bringing the child into the world, but also in the upbringing, training and care of the child. This includes setting goals, priorities, discipline and provision. The child is not my child or your child, but “our child.”

There should be oneness in handling the finances of the home. This is a source of problems among many. Some talk about “her money and his money.” This is foolish. You may not agree, but you need to consider this point more seriously. Money problems have caused much strife in marriages. An understanding that in marriage it is no longer “me, my, mine,” nor “you and yours,” but it becomes “we, us, ours” in everything.

Teamwork demands loyalty to one another. This would eliminate many problems. Nobody from outside the marriage can intrude into a marriage where husband and wife are loyal to each other. This includes having and showing respect for each other’s feelings, refusing to embarrass and destroy the other.

For Life

Teamwork in marriage means you are together for life, in good times, bad times, sharing joys, sorrows, loads, burdens, in sickness or health, adversity or prosperity, not pulling apart, not pulling against, but pulling with each other. It is a case of “me and you against the world.”

The words of Ruth state the idea. *“The Lord do so to me and more also If ought but death part thee and me.”* Jesus said, *“What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”*

A Basic Point

Teamwork in marriage means being united in THE FAITH. It is not enough to be united in a faith, but THE FAITH. Both ought to be Christians as the Bible teaches. Unless both are in Christ there is no standard by which to measure, no rule for making decisions, no guide for life, no basis for solutions to differences. Let us teach our young to marry *“in the Lord.”* So many who have ignored this teaching have lived to regret it and more are lost to the cause of Christ than remain faithful in a religiously divided home. The best team is one composed of a Christian husband and a Christian wife. It is difficult enough at times to resist the devil when you are standing together. How much more difficult when you are divided in the most important matter of life, your relationship to God. Like machinery, it is not the revolutions that wear out the machine, it is the friction. When both are Christians you have the oil that will keep down friction.

We need to teach our young, as many of us have been taught, that the primary

goal in marriage is to help each other get to heaven. This is a statement of Peter, “...*dwelling with them... as heirs together of the grace of life*” (First Peter 3:7). Recognize that you both are precious souls, precious to each other and precious to God.

The Leader

Every team must have a leader. In God’s plan the husband is the leader of the home. This does not please everyone. But it pleases all who love God (Ephesians 5:23).

There are alternatives to teamwork. What are these alternatives? There is frustration, estrangement, heartbreak, betrayal, harsh words, bitterness, regret, agony, broken homes, scarred children, ruined lives, separations, loneliness, hatred, handicapped youth, lost souls. Unless the God-designed team functions as God has designed it, Satan will run in some substitutes that will destroy everyone involved.

Value of Experience

While watching a sporting event and playoff games I heard one commentator say, “Have you noticed how that most of the time the teams with experience are the ones that make the playoffs.” He was simply observing how experience makes the team more effective. This is true in sports. It is also true in marriage. You learn to think alike, work smoothly, understand each other, grow together, where one stands, two stand, and you never walk alone.

We speak of newlyweds and how they seem so well suited for each other. Bless their hearts, they may well be. But they are not near as well suited as they shall become as they go through life together.

God’s team consists of a husband and wife, living together, loving God and each other, in the oneness of marriage, and in Christ.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What does the Bible use to teach the relationship between Christ and the church?
2. What is a yoke? Is it good or bad?
3. How would you define a team?
4. What Biblical phrases in Genesis 2 show teamship?
5. What are the requirements for a good team?
6. In what areas must there be teamwork in marriage?
7. Who is to be the leader of the team?
8. Discuss the value of experience in having a good team.
9. What is the proper composition of the marriage team?
10. Marital relationship is even closer than what other very close relationship?

Illegitimate Children

Our lesson concerns a very serious moral problem that has devastating repercussions upon society, the economy and the spiritual welfare of many people. It is a problem that threatens to erode civilization and respect for the Word of God. We are told that one of six children born in our nation are illegitimate. In some ethic groups the rate is over fifty per cent.

An illegitimate child is a child born of a woman, the father of which is not the husband of the woman, therefore, the child does not bear the father's name. It is a child born out of wedlock. The child is born as the result of sinful sexual conduct.

The extent of this problem has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years due to the so-called "new morality," which has given license to any and every kind of sexual relationship without limit. Thousands upon thousands of children are being born to unwed parents. Homes are operated for unwed mothers, government expenditure has increased for both the care of the mother as well as the children. Many of these mothers are teenagers, if not most of them. This does not take into account the thousands upon thousands of unborn children who are murdered each year by some form of abortion, legal and illegal. The figures are staggering because of their enormity and grow upward year by year.

Nor does this take into account the lowered morals of those who conceive the child out of wedlock but who are married before the child is born. Marriage does not place a robe of sanctity around illicit sexual relationships that occur before marriage. The child born of pre-marital sex is not counted, however, as an illegitimate child even though the child was illegitimately conceived.

There is no way to be accurate regarding the extent of the fornication and adultery that evidently runs rampant in society. The shame and disgrace of conceiving a child out of wedlock, bearing a child out of wedlock, being sexually immoral, has been removed to a great extent because of the acceptance by society of sin, the defiance of the will of God, the lack of consistency among religious people between word and deed, the general decay of morality across the board. The sin regarding illegitimate children is not a sin of the children. It is actually a misnomer to declare the child illegitimate as if the child was in some way evil.

The child is as innocent of sin as any other child. The man and woman who produce the child are the ones who are illegitimate and immoral. The extent and influence of their sin resounds far beyond the birth of the sinless child.

No Double Standard

Sin is no more chargeable to the woman than to the man, or vice versa. Even though the world has often had a double standard in such matters, there never was a double standard with God. The shame of the double standard has been largely removed in recent years because now more and more people do not consider it shameful to violate God's laws of morality anymore. While women may bear more of the problems caused by a child born out of wedlock, this due to the physical production of the child, giving birth, caring for the child, and finding ways to support the child, the guilt of sin is as

damnable to one as the other. Many men have been led to believe that if the woman with whom they commit fornication should conceive that the problem is altogether her problem. But both have contributed to the damnation of the soul of each other.

We hear a lot of talk today on the subject of abortion that the woman should be given the right over her own body. Nobody disputes that. What some deranged minds cannot understand is that she has exercised the control over her body when she gave herself to illicit relationships. Once a child has been conceived there is more than just her body that must be considered. She had control over her body and she ignored the sin and responsibility that inescapably accompanies this conduct.

The problem of illegitimacy, illicit sex, is not confined to any one social or economic level of people. It is a moral infection that has invaded the rich, poor, educated, uneducated, black, white, and every group, including church-going people. Many are aroused over the social problem and the health problems, but not so much because of the offenses against morality. They are aroused because of the increasing tax burden this willful defiance of God has produced. The costs are rising and the burden is appalling. But the Christian is concerned because of his hatred of sin and love for souls. It is this moral and spiritual failure and breakdown that grieves the heart of the child of God far more than any other related consequences.

Teach Morality

It is true, however, that this scar of sin occurs far less among those who have been taught morality, who know they are not merely animals that have evolved, who realize they are responsible before God and man for their behavior, and who retain some self-respect and personal dignity. Anyone who does not have respect for the value of Bible study, religious training, moral teaching, Christian principles and human dignity simply does not understand the only remedy and solution to this increasing blight among humankind.

Once it is known that a child has been conceived out of wedlock there are great problems to those involved. The first impulse is to chastise and rebuke those who sin. But it is really too late for preaching. If preaching is to be done it must be the condemnation of sin and the plea for repentance that seeks forgiveness. But what has been done cannot be undone. There is no way that minimizes the enormity of the sin, however.

Parents weep many tears wondering, "Where did we go wrong?" regarding their children who get so involved. Very likely it is not what was done wrong, but what was not done at all. It is frightening to know that over half of those under twenty years of age are receiving no kind of moral training from anybody anywhere. The neglect of proper guidance and teaching is a tragedy. Providing biological information and "birth control" devices does not resolve the problem. The problem is the lack of morality and respect for God. When moral teaching is neglected by parents, or ignored by youths, what else can be expected except the results of sin and the just recompense of reward? It is a spiritual tragedy of the worst sort.

Disobedience

What all must come to realize is that illicit sexual relationships are demonstrations of disregard for God. It is a gross disrespect for His authority. It is sin. Many who know

the truth ignore the truth. Mere knowledge of God's will is not enough, even though essential. There must be the determination to comply with His will. With this "do-your-own-thing" attitude that is so prevalent today, and being promoted on every hand, illegitimate children are inevitably some of the consequences.

Illicit sexual activity is sometimes provoked by the lack of security in the home. With the enormous divorce rate, single parent homes, mothers working outside the home and children cared for by others, the security level for many children is at rock bottom. They seek companionship and acceptance. When parents are so busy they cannot take care of their children, seeking acceptance for themselves from almost any quarter, their children act similarly and find themselves in sin.

Boys have deceived girls into suggesting that sex is a proof of "love." It is the very opposite when the sex proposed is between two who are not married. Nobody who really loves another will ask that they damn the soul to prove anything. You do not prove love through sin. You prove love by refusing to sin.

Weak fathers, dominant mothers, children even with plenty of money but a scarcity of morals, creates insecurity and feelings of not being wanted. To feel wanted many have dissipated their bodies in fornication. Empty houses, loose supervision, worldly ambitions, peer pressure and the neglect of God in the home is at the root of the whole sordid and hideous scene. The craving for pleasure, material things, attractiveness and getting ahead have ruined the lives and eternity of millions.

Can We Blame These?

Some have blamed society, finances, education and other factors that likely have contributed somewhat to illicit conduct. But there are many who are poor, who live in deprived areas, who have not had every educational opportunity, but who have been taught truth, and who are not among the immoral.

There will ever be the natural curiosity among the young about the opposite sex. Parents have failed to teach children regarding the body. As a result, many today are clamoring for the schools to do the job, often by teachers who are so stupid as to think that sex can be properly presented in a vacuum of moral teaching. True, too many children get their "facts of life" from the back alley, restrooms, locker rooms, dirty jokes and filthy conversation. But this only aggravates the problem.

The disrespect for God's laws regarding marriage, the sacredness of marriage, the permanency of marriage, faithfulness in marriage, the laws of God as to who is and is not marriageable, all have paved the way for the moral breakdown that brings children into the world with father and mother not married to each other. Some are led to think that all sexual activity is evil rather than a beautiful, God-given expression reserved for those who are married to each other.

Even in the church there are those who have left God's law about marriage and divorce, granting divorces for any cause, granting the right to marry to almost anybody, no discipline in the church toward those who defy God's teaching. They have surrendered to the ways of the world and are trying to accommodate sin and convert God to fit sinful mankind. We should not think that God will hold such false brethren guiltless of their false doctrines and wicked practices which they promote.

The Solution

The only real solution to the problem is to prevent illicit sexual conduct. Once one has sinned we must strive for the conversion of the heart, repentance and restoration through forgiveness. But why should so many have to suffer the agony of sin, the disgrace of bearing a child out of marriage, the regret and pain that shall forever follow? Why must there be the flow of grief that sin brings? God has given us the way to go. Why should we not walk His way?

There must be a recognition that fornication is sin. Galatians 5:19-21 is a list of “*works of the flesh*” which if practiced prevents entrance into the kingdom of God. The first two sins are adultery and fornication. Ephesians 5:3 teaches that fornication is not even to be named among saints. Colossians 3:5 mentions fornication that is to be mortified or put to death. “*Abstain from fornication*” is the instruction of First Thessalonians 4:3. First Corinthians 6:18, “*Flee fornication.*”

Among the works of the flesh is also lasciviousness. This is that which inclines toward lewd and immoral thoughts and actions. Therefore, there should be teaching against the modern dances, pornographic literature, running with the “fast crowd,” late hours, and other such things that provoke the loss of control of passions. The skimpy attire and immodest clothes many wear in order to be fashionable have tempted the very sinfulness that results in children being born out of wedlock. Petting, beach parties, filling the mind with the sex-oriented movies and television programs all contribute to the breakdown of moral restraint and obedience to God.

Forgiveness

Sin can be forgiven. But the scars of sin plague the one who commits sin throughout the rest of life. This is surely so evident with the sin of illicit sex that results in conception of a new life. Regret is a difficult matter to overcome. “*Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*” (Galatians 6:7). Efforts to cover the fornication and birth of children conceived out of wedlock do not succeed. Giving the child for adoption seldom really solves the problem. At best, it only shifts it elsewhere. Marriage can partially cover conception out of wedlock as far as giving the child a name. But only the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse the souls stained in fornication.

We must provide for the oncoming generations a sense of purity, decency, morality, responsibility, security, proper companionship, care and genuine Christian love. We cannot rely upon the unwanted conceptions, the possibility of disease and other such factors to motivate people to morality. We must teach them the love of God and respect for His ways. Only then can there be a significant dent made in the distress and shame of what is called the problem of illegitimate children.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is usually meant by “illegitimate children?”
2. Is there a double standard in morality?
3. Who sins when a child is born out of wedlock?
4. How can this moral blight be corrected?
5. On whom does the blame rest in such cases?
6. Can immorality be forgiven?

Is the Young Man Safe?

We who are older should sense more keenly the responsibility that we have toward those who are younger whether we are parents or simply interested in their welfare. There are probably no verses in the Bible that should strike a parent with attention more than Ephesians 6:4 and Proverbs 22:6. *“And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”* *“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”* Our lesson centers on one of the tragic questions of the Bible, asked by King David as he sat at a gate of a little place called Mahanaim which was but a short distance from Jerusalem. He was not there by choice but had been driven there as a result of a revolt against him led by his own son, Absalom. The question was, *“Is the young man Absalom safe?”* (Second Samuel 18:29).

About Questions

The Bible raises many questions and they are not all asked for the purpose of extracting information. The very first question of the Bible was asked by the devil. *“Hath God said ye shall not eat of any tree in the garden?”* (Genesis 3:1). This was not asked for information, but as a means of creating confusion and doubt in the mind of Eve. The devil knew that doubt was the first step toward disobedience.

Another question was asked by God of Cain, *“Where is thy brother, Abel?”* This was an embarrassing question to Cain, seeing how he had murdered his brother. God knew what had happened, but raised the question to impress upon Cain his responsibility and the enormity of his crime. Cain responded by asking a question, *“Am I my brother’s keeper?”* He asked this in an effort to escape his guilt.

Job asked, *“If a man die shall he live again?”* Christ asked, *“What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”* Neither of these questions sought information, but showed the inestimable value of the soul.

Some questions are asked in order to trick, deceive, entangle and ensnare. But David’s question was asked for information. He wanted to know. *“Is the young man safe?”* It is somewhat strange that this would be the question on his lips at that time, considering the manner and character of Absalom and the events of the moment.

Absalom

Absalom was a very wicked person. He was murderer, having killed his half-brother, Amnon. Because Amnon had ravished Absalom’s sister, Absalom took the law into his own hands and punished Amnon by death. Prior to killing Amnon he had nourished hatred and vengeance in his heart for two years. As a result of his crime he had to flee from Jerusalem for three more years before he tried to use Joab, David’s captain, to make reconciliation for him.

When Joab refused to intercede on his behalf, Absalom resorted to blackmail and violence, threatening to destroy the crops of Joab unless he helped him.

When he returned to Jerusalem he remained there for two years before being

permitted into the courts of King David. During this time he was busy building hatred toward his father and plotting to overthrow him. He would sit at the gates of the city and when citizens would enter the city to have some matter settled by the king Absalom would complain that they would not get justice and David was really unconcerned about them, and if only he could be in charge they would see better days. The Bible says he stole the hearts of the people away from David. This was no little accomplishment seeing how the people had adored David from the time he had slain Goliath.

Absalom finally asked leave to go from Jerusalem to Hebron on the premise he was going to keep a vow he had made. He was given a leave of absence. But it was not to keep a vow, but to muster his forces to revolt against David. He led the rebellion and did what no other enemy of David had been able to do, that is, drive David off his throne and from his capital city.

David's Flight

David leaving Jerusalem was a low point in David's life. He was fleeing for his life, his heart was broken, his own son was rebelling against him, his forces were in such disarray that he knew not what to expect from them, and some of his trusted advisors had sided with Absalom. He knew that it was in part his punishment for his own sins. But however philosophical David viewed the situation, there can be no doubt but the character of Absalom was contemptible and reprehensible. He was a liar, a revolutionary, a murderer, a subverter and blackmailer.

But after this initial success by Absalom it soon became apparent that David's army had not forsaken him. David began operations to recover his throne. The armies of David and Absalom met on the field of battle. It was a case of son against father and father against son. What a tragic situation! The son had disgraced his father and would have gladly sacrificed his father to secure his own unholy ambitions. Yet, before the battle begins David instructs his men and all his captains, "*Deal gently with the young man for my sake.*" Absalom deserved severe treatment, but for David's sake he pleaded that Absalom not be harshly treated.

The Conflict and Absalom

A great conflict followed and some twenty thousand fell in the forest of Ephraim. Absalom's army was routed, scattered and crushed by the more experienced, better trained, better led armies of David. David anxiously awaited word of the outcome as he sat at Mahanaim.

A messenger came toward him, then another. David asked the question, "*Is the young man Absalom safe?*" It is remarkable that this was what was most important to him. He did not ask the outcome of the battle, how many lives were lost, or whether the throne was recaptured. His concern was for his son, Absalom.

The answer he received told the story. "*Would that all the enemies of David were as Absalom.*" Absalom was dead, and his mangled body was buried beneath a pile of stones deep in the heart of the forest of Ephraim. No, Absalom was not safe. In reality, David's inquiry about the safety of his son had come much too late. He should have asked that long before now. It was too late to do anything for Absalom.

Too Late

David should have asked that question when he chose Absalom's mother to be his wife. She was the daughter of Talmai the king of Geshur, a heathen land and of pagan people who cared nothing for the true and living God. David violated God's law by taking her for his wife. That marriage was not motivated by love and respect for God or anyone else. It was purely for selfish and political interests, seeking alliances to enhance his own power. He took her, not asking what kind of mother she would be for his children, or what spiritual effect she would have on the lives of those around her. So many enter marriage without ever giving God and His will very much thought. No, Absalom was not safe even before he was born. He was not safe in the selection of his mother.

David should have asked, "*Is the young man safe?*" when he was looking with lustful eyes upon Bathsheba, when he was ruining the home of Uriah and conspiring to have Uriah killed in battle as if it were nothing. He should have been concerned when he was lying, trying to cover his sins by committing more sins. No child is safe when his father or mother is engaged in matters that are evil. How many parents today are putting stumblingblocks in the paths of their own children, pitfalls into which the young might fall, placing mines in their roadway to explode to their harm, and doing this by their own evil?

There is no evidence that David gave time, attention and interest in the training of Absalom, spiritually or otherwise. There was not the proper discipline when Absalom did evil. Spiritual training was obviously lacking, seeing the kind of person Absalom was. Parents harm their children immeasurably when they withhold proper discipline from them, when they are not attentive to the upbringing of their children, when they are too busy with other things, such as house, jobs, sports and fulfilling their own ambitions. David was a busy man. He was guilty, however, of neglect relative to Absalom. Absalom was not the first son, nor the last, to suffer because his parents were not what they ought to have been, nor reared as they should have been. The stones that covered the pit in the forest of Ephraim wherein did lay the body of Absalom was a monument to parental neglect of a child.

Self-rebuke and Regret

The question, "*Is the young man Absalom safe?*" is a heart-breaking question because there is so much self-rebuke in it. In Absalom's death David saw more than the death of his son. While he could know that Absalom had reaped as he had sown, he also knew that much of the blame was his own. Young people have responsibility, but so do those who are older. It is a terrible thing for a parent to realize that the suffering and tragedy visited upon his own children are the results of his own sin, neglect and selfishness. David wailed, "*O my son, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son.*"

The Worse Loss

David was experiencing the deepest grief one can know. He had a son to die before and he had already suffered that. But he knew that he could go to him even though

he could not bring him back (Second Samuel 12). But now he was not only reliving the agony of the death of one of his children, but he knew he had helped to make it that way. Nothing now could be done. His question of concern had come too late.

We must wonder how many parents today should be raising the question regarding their own children while there is time for them to do something about their duty toward that child. Is your child safe? Is he safe if you do not give him the advantages of a Christian example? Is he safe if you are neglecting his spiritual training to live God's way? Is he safe if you are overly occupied with other matters that you neglect him? Is he safe with the friends and companions he has? Is he safe in the recreation he has, his education, where he goes and what he does?

Do it Now

If we do not discharge the duty of love now while we have time and opportunity, we may be the one who someday will ask, "Is my child safe?" but we will be asking too late.

John Greenleaf Whittier wrote: "For of all sad words of tongue or pen, The saddest of these, it might have been."

It might have been different with Absalom if it had first been different with David. What we who are older do makes a difference. We cannot lead where we will not go. God help us to show our love toward our young by living before God according to His Word.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What was the occasion provoking this question?
2. Why was the question asked?
3. Why was David too late in asking this question?
4. What events in his life made him too late?
5. What loss is worse than the physical death of you child?
6. Discuss: "For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest of these, it might have been."

Marriage

Evidently the subject of marriage has been too often neglected, judging from the disintegration of so many marriages. So many have experienced tragedy in marriage that the very subject and study of it may be offensive to some. Certainly it is not the aim and purpose to discourage those who have made mistakes regarding their marriage. We usually find that those who have suffered bad marriages would prefer others avoid making the same mistakes they have made. Because there is so much controversy on the subject of marriage any preacher approaches the study with caution and prayer. Because so many seem determined to do whatever they want to do regardless of what God teaches it makes the study all the more difficult. We must leave out personal opinions but stick closely to that which is revealed regarding the institution of marriage.

Our text is Genesis 2:18-24. *“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof: And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”*

Divine

First, we learn that marriage is a divine institution just as the church is a divine institution. It has come into being from the mind of God. It was brought into existence by God for the benefit of mankind. It is regrettable that so many people have taken so lightly the divine origin and divine instruction regarding marriage. This has contributed to the many difficulties and failures that have been experienced.

It is the work of the church to proclaim God’s truth regarding marriage. There is much cause for concern seeing the moral decline in our society and our children growing up into a society where respect for marriage is lessened plus the fact that the divorce rate has reached epidemic proportions. Many marriages that do not end in divorce are not happy ones. Thousands of babies are born each year where father and mother are not married to each other. This disregard of moral purity and God’s arrangement for the home is a threat to the very continuation of our nation and the liberty that we enjoy. Nations, like people, reap what they sow. Even the church is experiencing more and more divorce. Some have surrendered God’s standards to accommodate what is taking place in the world and are condoning marriages that do not have approval according to Scripture. Because marriage failures have become so frequent, the tendency is to find some way around the strictness of God’s law.

But if we will pay any attention to history we will see that marriage and the home have been and still are the primary bulwark of strength to any nation. From the homes come those who run the government, teachers, religious leaders and workers. The home, more than any other institution, sets the moral climate for the society. When the home is degenerate, what can be expected for the rest? If we will consider such nations as Israel, Judah, Greece, and Rome we will see that disrespect for the home has led to the collapse of the system altogether.

What We Can Do

There is not very much any one individual may be able to do to stem the destructive tide of marital failure. But each can make his or her own personal contribution by making sure his, or her, own marriage is proper. We all need to learn and abide by God's own will regarding the laws, duties, privileges and all other matters pertaining to marriage. The most productive effort is probably in the area of preventing problems by having the right kind of marriage rather than correcting problems already existing. This is because so many people are dead set to do as they see fit. If they are united with one unlawfully and unscripturally, few will terminate that adulterous situation. But if we can teach and persuade the unmarried before they get into an unscriptural marriage to build correctly, the problem can be lessened.

Marriage is For Life

The rule of God is, as we can see from our text, that God intends for a man and woman who come together as husband and wife to live together in that relationship until they are separated by death. Matt. 19:3-6, "*The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*" This is God's law under Christ, which is God's law from the beginning. Forsaking all others, mates are to cleave to each other. Once married, stay married. This concept of trying it a while, and if it does not work then divorce, is of the devil. This idea has been glamorized into social acceptability through movies, television, the many marriages of prominent people and the abandonment of respect for God's word.

There are but two causes for terminating marriage. Let us hasten to add here that gaining some kind of legal termination does not mean that God accepts what the courts decree. As Christians, we can never allow God's will to be set aside by the lesser authority of the laws of the land. Courts will allow divorces for almost any, every, even no cause. But God does not recognize such perversion of His institution. Death terminates the marriage. Romans 7:3, "*So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.*" Let us emphasize that death is the only honorable way for a marriage to end. The other way that God allows involves sin.

Grounds for Divorce

God will allow divorce on the grounds of adultery. Matt. 19:7-9, *“They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”* God does not simply accept divorce. It must be for the reason specified. In the event of fornication, there is always the avenue of forgiveness. But God does not demand nor expect one to continue to live with a mate who is unfaithful to the marriage vows.

A man and his wife may be separated, but if so, there are two alternatives open to them. They may either be reconciled, or remain unmarried (1 Cor. 7:11). The Biblical teaching is, when you marry, stay married.

Privileges and Duties

Marriage brings privileges and duties to those involved. Ephesians. 5:22-25, *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”* Here are general instructions to both husbands and wives. Wives are to be subject to husbands. Husbands are to love their wives. When we consider the relationship that is to exist between Christ and the church then we will see what God wants in marriage.

Mates have physical duties to each other. One of the purposes of marriage is the satisfaction of the sexual desires of the body. 1 Cor. 7:1-5, *“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me, It is good for a man not to touch a woman; nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence, and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.”*

Possibly something that needs emphasis is that the sexual union of husband and wife is God-ordained, pure, holy and honorable. Hebrews 13:4, *“Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”* That which is sacred and holy in marriage is base and immoral outside of marriage. There is nothing vulgar, unclean or immoral in the sexual union of mates in marriage. But all such relations before marriage or outside of marriage is sinful before God. That there is widespread disregard of the sanctity of marriage is so blatant and obvious. Everywhere one turns he sees presented to him situations calling for immorality, sexual union outside of marriage, adultery, fornication and unfaithfulness to partners. This has become the norm in modern entertainment. While it is wrong to teach your children that physical satisfaction of the sex drive is evil and impure, it is also wrong not to teach them that God has provided for that but only in marriage. All of this cheap talk about liberties, new

morality, etc., is nothing but sexual bondage in sin and the same old immorality that has damned humanity through the ages.

Cooperation

The husband and wife ought to cooperate in every phase of marriage. This includes financial matters, social affairs, the rearing of children, making decisions that affect one another and the family. They are in a partnership, two working as one. No longer are matters to be considered on the basis of me, my, and mine on the one hand, and you and yours on the other. In marriage it is we, us, ours. There must be that togetherness.

Marry in the Lord

Let us also urge that Christians marry Christians. Sometimes the question is asked, "Is it wrong for a Christian to marry one who is not a Christian?" According to everything that experience shows one of the major causes of marital strife is the failure to agree religiously. There is absolutely no question but the Christian places great handicaps on his or her soul by marrying a non-Christian. Not only do they jeopardize their own souls, but those of children that may be born into that marriage. While it is true that God recognizes marriages between people who are not Christians, and between people one of whom is a Christian and the other who is not, this does not mean God is pleased with that relationship. How can there be the supremacy of Christ in a home when one of the mates do not even respect Christ as the Savior, and has not obeyed His gospel? The chances of success, happiness and spiritual contentment are hindered immeasurably when a Christian acts unwisely by marrying a non-Christian. So many who do this are led into apostasy because of the influence of the non-Christian mate that gradually erodes their faith and confidence in Christ.

Some are heard to contend how things worked out so well for them. And this is true. Many have been converted because they married a Christian even though it was a mixed marriage. If that be the case with anyone, let them be grateful that both are now united in Christ. But what of the encouragement given to others who married outside the church and now have left the church?

We ought never encourage people to marry someone in order to convert them. And how can the Christian really impress their faith on the non-Christian when, as is so often the case, the matter of religion is hardly considered in making the marriage? While it may not be a sin in every case, although in some instances it would surely be, it can be said without any doubt that it is unwise, dangerous, and against what God prefers.

Causes of Failure

As we think of the causes of marital failure, high on the list is the strife over finances, suspicion and jealousy, the refusal to have children, being so selfishly interested in one's own interests to the neglect of the other and immaturity. All these things go to break up the home.

As the person contemplates marriage, one of the first concerns should be, "Can I help this person go to heaven? Can this person help me go to heaven? Are we on a

relatively similar social, racial, economic and educational level?” There must be compatibility. If that is lacking, there will be contention and strife. Broad differences will provoke tensions.

The subject of marriage is so broad and encompassing that it is impossible to do more than just touch the various areas of concern, each of which deserves detailed study. But if we could only get people to give more thought and study with a greater respect to God’s design and purpose in marriage we would all profit and our homes would be more stable.

The happiest, most successful marriage is that between two Christians who establish a home where Christ reigns supreme, rearing children to be Christians, living and loving as God has intended. God, who made the human family, knows better than anyone else what is required to make the human family happy and complete. If we would only listen to God!

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Are there evidences that proper teaching on marriage has been neglected?
2. What kind of institution is marriage?
3. What difference does this make in our understanding and disposition of it?
4. How can you, as one individual, do something positive about the marriage crisis?
5. What is God’s intent for the duration of marriage?
6. What are the two causes for terminating a marriage?
7. What is the single cause for divorce that God allows?
8. Do you agree with the duties and privileges of marriage stated in this lesson?
9. What are some of the causes for marital failure?
10. What is meant by “marry in the Lord?”

KATHERINE LOUISE BOYD
“MOTHER’S FUNERAL”
NOVEMBER 28. 1997
LEBANON ROAD
CHURCH OF CHRIST
BY JAMES W. BOYD

The following is a transcript of remarks I made at Mother’s funeral. I have also listed the songs as they were sung. These words were intended to be a tribute to both Mother and Dad, and an expression of gratitude for the kind and quality of home they provided for my older brother, younger sister, and me in the days of our youth.

Dad was born on July 14, 1895 and died June 25, 1963. Mother was born November 12, 1902 and died November 24, 1997. They were married for over forty years.

My thanks to Pat Gauger for making the transcript of my comments for me.

SONG: “JESUS, SAVIOR, PILOT ME”

Experience teaches us, and more importantly the Scriptures, *“It is appointed unto man once to die”* (Hebrews 9:27). But the Psalmist also says, *“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints”* (Psalm 116:15). In the book of Revelation, *“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”* We come today basking in the sunlight of such teaching because Mother lived in the Lord and she died in the Lord. And we take our comfort in the promises that God has given us in His inspired Word. Jesus said to His Apostles, *“Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, there ye may be also”* (John 14 1-3).

To my mind one of the most comforting passages of Scripture to those who are Christian people, who have to bid good-bye to their loved ones, was when the Apostle Paul was writing in First Thessalonians four concerning two classes of Christians; those who had already died and those who were still living. *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the*

voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (vs. 13-17). And then he tells us why he wrote this passage, “Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.”

The Bible student is very familiar with that great chapter of the resurrection, First Corinthians fifteen. Paul wrote, *“But some say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” (vs.35-44). Then he concluded this chapter, “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (vs. 53-57).*

One final passage that is very appropriate, it seems to me, considering the difficulties that Mother had in her last days, *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21: 4).*

Brother Wayne Coats was to preach Mother’s funeral by her request. Because of his operation of late, he is not able to do it, and so we’ll do the best we can under the circumstances.

You noticed the pall-bearers when they came in; they are Mother’s grandsons and she requested them to be her pall-bearers. Some of them had to make a tremendous effort to be here. They helped one another to get here. They love their grandmother and they consider it an honor to be able to render this service to her. How proud she would be to see them.

We’re going to be led in prayer by Betty’s husband, Jack Copeland. Jack was considered by Mother to be her third son and he is going to lead us in prayer at this time; Brother Jack. .

Pray with me please. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for this quiet time and peaceful place where we can assemble in honor of our loved one that is passed from this life. We are thankful for the many things, especially at this season of the year. We are thankful for the life of Katherine Louise Boyd and for the influence and wonderful memories that she has left for us. We are thankful for the members of the family that are able to assemble here today and we ask at this time a special blessing on those who can not be with us and be among us at this particular time. We want to thank You for those who have so faithfully, kindly and patiently attended her every need over the years and especially the last months of her life. Help us, Father, to always love one another and stay close as a family as she would have us to do. Be with all of us that are attending here today as we leave this place and let us carry, each in our own way, the good memories we have had of a mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and a friend. And we pray all of this through your gracious Holy name, through Jesus' name. Amen.

SONG: PASS ME NOT, O GENTLE SAVIOR

On behalf of my brother, B.B. and my sister, Betty, we want to say, "Thank you," to all of you, those of you who have come, those of you who came by the funeral home, but mostly, or in addition I should say, to those of you who through the years loved our Mother and helped her and sent her cards, flowers and visits and food (and I got in on some of that) and you called and you inquired about her. All of our family thanks you for what you have done and to this congregation, which she dearly loved and the people of it, in particular. There are some nearly fifty of us now and I don't know whether Mother wants to take the blame for all that or not but every one of us thank each of you.

Our hearts are not only here today, of course, but our hearts are with B.B. After all, B.B. and Kitty and their family looked after the needs of our dear Mother for thirty or more years and it is a sad thing to us that he is not able to be here, but our thoughts and prayers are ever with him. Each person and each member of our family will remember Mother, and remember her differently because of the difference of the associations we had with her. I got to thinking about people that would remember Mother and her life. Not many, if any, will remember her youth. Mama lived ninety-five years. About a week before her ninety-fifth birthday, which was on the twelfth of this month, I went to her side and I said, "Mama, next Wednesday you'll have a birthday." She just sort of looked at me. And I said, "You'll be ninety-five years old," and Mother said, "Good grief."

A number of you will certainly remember her in her adult years and the more active years, and you don't know how it warms our hearts to hear those of you who were, I say, privileged to sit in her Bible classes and remember the things that she strove to teach from the Word of God, and see your appreciation of them. I do think that she made an impact upon many lives. It is true that most of us will remember her last days, but we know that her last days were hard days. She was terribly handicapped. She was in constant pain. I don't know of any better way to describe them than being very, very hard days; hour after hour and day after day; and though we grieve and sorrow as

anybody would at the loss of a loved one, a Mother, (they always have a special place), I think you can understand why we are somewhat relieved for our sake and her sake. It is hard to see your loved one suffer, isn't it? But we're relieved for her sake.

I want to talk about some of the times of Mother, and I want to speak about a time that, of all of us here, only Betty would remember it. I want to talk to you about a time when we were all at home on Overhill Drive. Mom contended that these were her happiest years, not that she did not have joy and happiness at other times. I think we can understand why. She had Dad and they were together and they were in the home and house they had built and she had her three children and Mama was such a family person, as we all know. Now, I'm not going to give you a family history. You would tire of that. But I want to give you a few illustrations of those days of Mom and Dad and B. and Betty and me back on Overhill. It will give you a little bit of an idea that describes Mom and Dad, and it is meant to be a sincere tribute to them both.

When we moved to Overhill, I was seven years old, so my memory goes back further than Overhill. One of the first things I do remember about my Mother was her reading Bible stories to my brother and me when we lived on Polk Avenue (it's Donelson Pike now) from Hurlburt's Bible Story Book. I still have that book and Betty's not going to get that. That is where we learned about the great Bible characters. That's where we were taught, right at her feet. It was a very interesting and happy time, at least I remember it so well.

We didn't have a supermarket in Donelson at that time. We bought our groceries at Hill's Grocery on Hermitage Avenue. I don't know whether it's even still there or not. But it was back during the time when you put three children in the back seat and ten dollars worth of groceries - you couldn't hardly turn around it was so crowded! And that always suited B.B. because he would get down in the floor of the seat and as he would ride home, he would constantly worry us all to death guessing where we were on the way home. "Are we at this point?" "No, B.B.!" "Are we at that point?" "No, you missed it again!" But we had that every time and that was fun.

I remember Mother for her big hats and I always will, and it's very appropriate that one of her hats are here on the casket today. She wore those big hats to church and on special occasions. As you know, Mama was a very dignified lady. She was very stylish I thought, and she had very good taste, and if you don't think so you just keep it to yourself because I know she did. Mother knew how to put things together, and she knew how to dress up when the occasion came, and I remember her for her big hats, and many of you do, too.

But I can't remember a time that I'd come home from school that Mama wasn't there and I think that's something the world needs to turn back to again, but that's another matter. Usually, she was there in the kitchen to meet us. And she always kept on top of the refrigerator a cookie jar, and that thing was constantly filled with homemade oatmeal cookies with raisins. Seldom did the well ever go dry. She would keep them there. If she wasn't in the kitchen to greet us, you would know exactly where she was, because

upstairs she had her foot-treadle Singer sewing machine, and you could hear it when you came in the door. They were sort of hard times and they didn't go out and just buy what they wanted to, and Mama made Betty's clothes. She would repair just about everybody else's. But I remember her being there when I came home from school.

But it is true that the church was very much the center of our home. Mother was a teacher. Dad was a teacher. He was a song leader, a deacon, an elder of the church eventually, as B.B. became. For years the Boyd family made the communion bread. Mrs. Ida Boyd, my grandmother, made it, and then Aunt Bess and Aunt Nell made it, and then finally it fell Mother's lot to make the communion bread. I remember one Sunday, we were at worship and the brother that was at the table picked up the tray and the bread wasn't there. Well, he just turned and looked at Daddy and Daddy stood up and, (they didn't sit together because Daddy was usually leading singing), and he just stood up and looked at Mother and Mother just looked down. I guess Betty and B.B. had caused such a stir that morning, I suppose, in getting off that she forgot it. But I remember that so vividly and Dad dashed home and we all just sat there until he got back and we continued our worship. But worship was a very serious business and they taught us reverence.

You know, anything that happens in church is funny that wouldn't be funny anywhere else. But I remember at the little Donelson church the floor slanted. Back then nearly all the contribution were coins, very little paper money but coins, and they would put it all in one tray right at the last. Evidently just as they had put it all in one tray, the brother that was holding it dropped it. Well, you can imagine, coins just started rolling down that thing just like an army coming in. You could just hear them rolling down and I just nearly burst. I held it about as long as I could and I thought I was doing pretty well, and then right where the floor leveled out, there were some air vents. And here came those coins, clickety, clickety, clackety, clackety! Well, I lost it. I just laughed right out loud and I never will forget that because it was impressed upon me later when we got home that it really wasn't as funny as I had thought it was. And they did that for a purpose and this tells us of something of Mama and Daddy. Worship to God was serious. And we should be reverent and we are in the presence of the Almighty. It's not a pep-rally. It's not a religious Hee-Haw. It's a time that we adore God and they impressed that upon us in a number of ways.

I know we learned a whole lot at church but it was, indeed, at home that we learned about God and His love for us, His care for us, His provision. We learned about Christ and His sacrifice and being our Savior. We learned the Bible to be the Word of God. It was at home that we were taught about the church and the difference between the Lord's church and the human denominations. It was at home that we were taught the plan of salvation and we were impressed with having a personal responsibility and an accountability. It was at home that our priorities were established and our values and we were taught morality and we were taught reverence, and it was at home that we were disciplined. Mom and Dad were disciplinarians. They tried at least, and I always knew, though I didn't always agree, they were fair. They tried to be fair in disciplining us. There was one

thing I soon learned, that when B.B. or Betty were being disciplined, which was so frequently the case, that you didn't gloat. You didn't dare show any joy that they were getting what they deserved because if you did, the next one was your turn.

But at our house, we had great fun. I mean great fun all the time. Now, all families have good times at Thanksgiving and Christmas and the Fourth of July and we had all that, but I'll tell you, dear friend, just about every day was a great fun day at our house. Dad built us a recreation room down in the basement. Clara May Benedict just mentioned that a few moments ago. We had a good time all the time.

My favorite room, and it's not for the reason you think, was the breakfast room. Now, I know you think it's because it was where we ate and that was wonderful because Mother sure could cook. But that breakfast room was a special room, and I'll tell you one thing that was rather humorous that happened in the breakfast room one time. Mother could make the best chocolate cakes. She'd make thick chocolate icing and it was our custom we would eat all the inside of the cake and save the icing till the last. On this particular occasion, the telephone rang. B.B. had already eaten his cake and his icing was there on the plate and the telephone was for B.B. So he left. Sure enough when he came back his icing was gone. He just immediately, I guess from past experience, thought I had taken it. He was coming around the table (my Daddy had taken it) and B.B. was coming around that table for me. Betty and B. sat on one side and I sat on the other because Betty was sometimes hard to get along with, so they put those two over there and me over here. And he was coming around after me, and Mother jumped up and grabbed him. She said, "Bowling, tell that boy you got that icing. Don't you let them start a fight over that." Mother saved the day for me that day!

At this breakfast table in the little breakfast room is where the family would talk and we would plan and we would be questioned. Very seldom were we disciplined at the table because they made it a pleasant experience. It was pleasant enough to eat Mother's food but they always made it a place where we learned they cared and they really loved us and we had guidance and we had encouragement and we had a great security. That's where we prayed together and it was just a special room because we ate breakfast together and we would eat supper together almost every night.

Mother and Dad were very insistent that we do our homework and our piano practicing - we won't discuss that too much - that was a sore spot with me sometimes. But after homework and after piano practice - we had a basement and you would come down the steps and at the foot of the steps is Mother did her ironing. I can see her now when she ironed everything that we wore. And we children would sit on those steps and listen to the radio with Mother and we would hear one night *Cecil B. DeMille's Lux Presents Hollywood*. Now you folks don't know anything about that, some of you, but that used to be a radio program. There was *Fibber McGee and Molly* and *Amos and Andy*. We would sit and listen and Mother would iron. Sometimes Dad would listen with us. Sometimes Dad was out making calls, but we always looked forward to when he came back in and nearly every time you know what he had? He had a quart of ice cream. I know he

couldn't afford it but we couldn't afford not to have it. So he would come in and again we would have another great family time.

Mother was a great flower gardener and she was a charter member of the Lebanon Road Garden Club. It's the second oldest chartered garden club in the state of Tennessee and Mother was a charter member of it. Mother could grow the most beautiful flowers and she would have these red roses over the front doorway of our house. I remember on Mother's Day, you know you would wear your red rose, and we would go out and she would pick one and pin it on us children. Down where the driveway met Overhill Drive was a telephone pole. Mother had a white rose bush there and you wear a white rose when your Mother has passed on. I can remember Dad going down to get his white rose and it always nearly broke my heart every Mother's Day to see Dad go down and get his white rose. Well, I remember well, I went down with him sometimes and one time (and I remember this especially), I asked Daddy, I said, "Daddy are you sad that your mama is gone?" He said, "Well, you always are but," he said, "I'm so glad that you get to wear a red one." There he told me what he thought of my Mother and I knew later what the writer of Proverbs said about the worthy woman, "*Her husband praises her.*" And I never will forget that because it said so much about them both.

Mother and Dad were very much involved in civic activities. Mother put in the first hot lunch for school children in Donelson Elementary School that there ever was and borrowed the money to buy the steam table with her own signature, and didn't have the slightest idea where it would come from if they had to pay it off. She worked in that cafeteria and believe you me, I was just King Tut when I went through that aisle to get our hot lunch and Mama was back there taking care of it. She was in the PTA and Dad was in the Civic Club and they were in all the Booster Clubs.

Folks, music was very prominent in our home. I'll never minimize that. They could sing; we would play. Mother was a very accomplished pianist. In fact, Mom and Dad sang and played over the radio during the depression to help supplement their income. They literally had to sing for their supper and those musical talents have been handed down to some other generations too, haven't they? And music has always had a very prominent place, not only at recital time, (I'd rather rub that one out), but we had family fun, and at church. Mom and Dad, I suppose sang for more funerals than could be counted and I deeply appreciate you people who are here today to take your time and your talent to honor Mother by the beautiful way that you are presenting these songs that were favorites of hers.

We had a lot of fun and a lot of games that we would play. One of them was we would tap out songs and try to guess what they were. Like "Home on the Range" - "Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam." (Tapping). Well, you get the idea, and then someone was supposed to guess which one that it was, you know, just by tapping. Well, I didn't know many songs and I couldn't tap very many of them correctly. But I did know "Home On the Range" and I would do it nearly every time. I remember one time, (and Mother was a very good referee), "All right, Jimmy, it's your time to tap," and before I started to

tap B.B. blurted out “Home On The Range.” Well, that teed me off a little bit and we got into it. We really got into it right there! “You’re supposed to wait till I tap it.” Mother had to separate us, and needless to say there was no ice cream that night.

We had a fair amount of teasing going on. Betty, of course, was our little sister. I remember very well - I don’t know whether she will or not - if she has any of these things memorized differently, I’ll just tell her she was too young to remember. But I remember that B.B. was going through the house and he would look at Betty and say “Betty is a baby - Betty is a baby.” Well, you can imagine. She just flew into a rage and started hollering and screaming and yelling to stop that. Mother would hear all the commotion. Here comes Mother. She would get onto Betty for carrying on and she would get onto B.B. for singing that like he was doing. I didn’t dare say anything, but I was enjoying every bit of it. And she would say, “Now B.B., don’t you sing that to her anymore!” And he didn’t. He obeyed her. But then he would come through and, “Hum, hum, hum, hum, hum, - hum! Hum, hum, hum, hum, hum, - hum.” And it would start all over again.,

But you know, looking back those times were fun. We had our rooms upstairs. Betty had a room at one end of the house and hers was a bigger room but B. and I shared a little bit smaller room but we had an outside upstairs porch and that is the reason we wanted it. B. and I shared that room all the time, and he had a radio. He had worked for that radio and he was just like an old mother hen for that radio, and unless you were authorized you just didn’t fool with that radio. Occasionally when he was going to be gone and I was there he would be so gracious to say, “Jim, you can play the radio.” Now wasn’t that big? And so I would. Of course, I played it a lot of other times that he didn’t know about also. But, we shared that room.

Dad had made us a desk with drawers in it facing each side. It was an old business desk of his, and he took off the top and turned one set of drawers around so each side had a set of drawers. The desk was in the middle of the room and that’s where B. and I would study and get our homework. We shared the desk for a long time. B. was always a real good student; just about as sharp as a briar. It helps to have an older brother who is ahead of you in school, who is really smart. You run into a snag; why he pulled me out of a many a one.

I can remember in the times that we tried to play sports and Mom and Dad, I don’t believe, missed a game that B.B. ever played or that I ever played. I don’t believe they ever did. Mother told us later on when we were trying to play football, she said “I’d take a deep breath every time to see if you all stood up.” She just agonized over it, but they were always there.

We cut grass a lot; all over the neighborhood. I cut Mrs. Bradley’s yard. I cut nearly every yard that was there in Bluefield. Dad took an old Maytag gasoline motor off of a washing machine and put it on a lawnmower and I had the first motorized lawnmower in Donelson, Tenn. Then I could get to where I could cut Mrs. Bradley’s yard in an hour and I’d get a dollar for it. I would cut four or five yards a day with that and I was rolling in

money with that motorized mower. There was something else Daddy made us, and this tells you how they took care of us. Daddy made us a little three wheel car that would run by a little Briggs-Stratton gasoline motor and you steer it like this and what more fun. Now, Kitty might can tell you more about this little car than I can, because after church on Sunday night and Wednesday night - and that's when Lebanon Road had at least three cars a day going over it - B.B. would take Kitty home. She lived up where used to be S-curve, and he would take Kitty home on Beelzebub. Wouldn't you love to have been in the back part of Beelzebub? That was the name of the little car, Beelzebub, you know, the Prince of Devils? Daddy gave it that name because he said it would run like the devil and was sometimes as hard as the devil to start. But that's what he called it. And they did a lot of courting in Beelzebub. Betty and Mother would go to the grocery store in Beelzebub and I got to take it to school and was always thankful to Dad.

I saw Billy Hooper last night, he's a cousin, he may not admit it, but I've already said it. And he said, "Jim, you know, we grew up in the best neighborhood." And we did! That neighborhood around Overhill Drive was a wonderful place for us to ride our bicycles at night and some ten, twelve, fourteen or fifteen of us would be riding bicycles at night and we knew when to come in. The Tennessee Central Railroad came through there and there was a train that would come through around ten o'clock every night. You could hear the first whistle as it crossed McGavock. You could begin to hear it coming and you could hear him blow his whistle until he got all the way around over to Stewart's Ferry Pike, and we knew when that whistle could no longer be heard, you'd better be home. You couldn't say I couldn't hear it because you could hear that whistle all over everywhere.

When we got home we would usually go out on the screened-in porch that Daddy had screened and we would have more good times. We had our chores. We cut grass and we raked leaves and carried out the trash and we did windows and we did dishes, too. We had a habit there at our home on Sundays taking turns drying the dishes. Now, Mother always washed but we dried the dishes and I never did like that particularly. But it was my turn to dry the dishes and I was drying and I announced to Mother that I was going to run away from home. I had just had enough of this. So it didn't seem to phase her a whole lot. She might have thought, "Whew, at last!" But I was just a little boy. I was going to run away from home. She said "Well, where are you going?"

"I'll find a place."

"Well, what are you going to eat?"

Well, Mr. Moore had a restaurant down in Donelson and I said, "I'll eat at Mr. Moore's." She said, "Well now, Mr. Moore doesn't give food away. You'll have to buy it and where you going to get your money?"

I said, "I'll get a job!"

Mother said, "Where'll you get a job?"

"I'll get a job at Mr. Moore's!"

Mother said, "Well, how will you get a job at Mr. Moore's? You can't cook!" I said, "I'll wash the dishes."

She said, "Well, you're washing dishes already. Why do you want to run away from home?" So I never did talk about running away from home anymore.

During these years of which I'm speaking, folks, the saddest I ever saw Mother was the time when we had to send B.B. off to the Navy. I didn't see Dad cry. I'm sure that he must have, but Mother really cried hard on that occasion. I saw her, of course, very sad after Dad's death and she was very sad after B B. was overtaken with his present illness, but I'm talking about those earlier years. I really didn't fully understand. It was rather exciting to me. He was going off and he was going to wear a uniform. The whole room would be mine and he couldn't take his radio and I had that and the desk was totally mine.

But that was a hard time for Mother and in fact, it almost made her ill worrying about him as you can imagine. But thank God he returned and we spent our time together in college until he and Kitty married. Years went by and one by one each of us would leave out. I did and then, of course, later on Betty did.

The place on Overhill was home as long as Mom and Dad lived there. Then Dad died over thirty-four years ago, and shortly thereafter Mother sold the place and, of course, that was a tremendous change for all of us. Now, I must maybe apologize to you. These things may seem trite to you. They may seem trivial. They may even seem inappropriate and out of place, but they are not to me. And I present them to you and to her children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren as a very sincere and genuine and from-the-heart tribute to my Mother and my Daddy.

I think, and it may be rather simplistic to analyze it this way, but Dad with his tremendous optimism and his continued enthusiasm, he kept our head in the clouds; and Mother with her more serious manner and her more strictness, she kept our feet on the ground, and that's the combination with which we were blessed. One kept our heads in the clouds and the other kept our feet on the ground, and really did the best they could and they blended together. What great blessings we received! You know God commanded folks in the Old Testament and the New, "Honor thy father and thy mother." That to me has been the easiest commandment God has ever given to obey and it is easy to obey when you have parents like we had.

Now, don't misunderstand, I'm sure Mom and Dad had their rough edges. I imagine seeing together some of the rough times, they had to have some rough edges. I suppose that you would really had to be a part of that home to know how wonderful it was, and to know how we cherish these memories so near and dear to us. They provided us guidance and stability and purpose and hope and will all the days of our lives

One final and personal note; I have been trying to preach for over forty-five years, and like other gospel preachers when I stand up to preach, I have a duty to God to get it right. I have a duty to myself. I have a duty to those who hear me. But I have an extra incentive. I have an extra motivation to get it right. I have a duty to Mom and Dad.

They taught us; they instructed us; they guided us. They set the example before us, and

they said more, I suppose, by what they were than even by what they said. You see, today is somewhat the end of an era in a way for our family because she's the last of that generation of our immediate blood kin here. So we come to this day, sure our hearts are heavy and you share that with us and we're grateful, but our hearts rejoice and we can say, "*The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.*"

Would you bow with me for prayer?

Holy Father in Heaven, we thank Thee that Thou art our God, and that Thou dost love us and care for us. We thank thee for Christ, our Savior. We thank Thee that the Spirit has revealed Thy all-sufficient Will and Word in the Scriptures. We are thankful for those who have loved us, and who have taught us, and persuaded us and encouraged us to walk in the footsteps of Christ. We are thankful for the Lord's Church, and that we can be members of it. We are thankful for home and for our families, and on this day especially, dear Lord, are we thankful for Dad and Mother. In Christ's name.

SONG: "IN THE MORNING OF JOY"

SONG: "GOD BE WITH YOU TILL WE MEET AGAIN".

Mother's body was buried alongside Dad's in Mount Olivet Cemetery, November 28, 1997.

Our Underestimated And Unprepared Youth

Without any intent to misrepresent young people, there are two words that I suggest describe so many young people today. These words are ***underestimated*** and ***unprepared***. Neither convey derision toward youth. One refers to an error that many of those of us who are older make regarding young people, and the other refers to something often lacking in young people. It is a shortcoming often found among older people as well.

First Samuel 17:38 reads, *“And David said to Saul, Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock.”* This statement was made by David during the time when Goliath was challenging Israel. David had come to the camp with supplies for his brothers, but he heard and saw the defiant giant. Even though nobody was willing to accept Goliath’s challenge, David offered himself to fight him. Saul’s reaction was, *“Thou are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him for thou art but a youth.”* On the basis of age, Saul would have denied David the opportunity to defend Israel and save God’s people. Saul considered David unprepared for such a fight. Because David was young, Saul underestimated him.

David’s Difference

Possibly Saul’s evaluation of David would have been correct with many of the youths of Israel. But David was different. How was he different? David had faith in God and put his trust in him. He had been taught and had learned to walk in the paths of righteousness rather than to lean on his own wisdom, power, ability and talent. He leaned on God. We know the outcome of the conflict between David and Goliath.

What of our young people? Do we discount them and disqualify them too quickly, simply because they are young? Have we underestimated them? Are they really as unprepared as we think? If they are, are we not the ones responsible for their preparation? There is a way for them to be prepared for the life they must live and it lies to a great extent with those of us to whom their care has been entrusted to assist in that preparation.

While some youths would not admit it, few of them realize how dependent they are on the older generation. Often older people are not as aware as they ought how dependent youth is on the aged. It is obvious that many young people are not prepared to serve God and are not being prepared. Someone has said, "Never has one generation of youths been told so much that they are so superior, yet, at the same time are they so ill-equipped to really meet life and live it successfully as God would have them to live." Another has said, "Seldom does one see a generation that considers itself to know so much and be so wise, yet, manifest such ignorance of things that really matter, and behave so foolishly." Whether these estimates are valid, we do not wish to argue. Possibly there may be some overstatement, but probably much truth lies in there. This new generation needs to be prepared for life before God. If the young are underestimated

and unprepared surely a great portion of the blame rests on those who have gone before them. Our lesson will center itself on the responsibility of the older generation.

Serious Problems

We see all around such evidence of moral and spiritual decay in the rock and roll culture with drugs, unwed mothers, pornography, drunkenness and every sort of anti-social behavior. These may be extremes and do not represent all youth, to be sure. But there is a real concern for the less extreme because so many youths are without moral standards, wandering about without spiritual guidance and restraint that is essential to the building of noble character. This is not because there is no standard but because the standard is ignored. We have seen several decades of degenerates being promoted on a large scale and the fruits are being witnessed everywhere. What is sown must be reaped, and the harvest is becoming of such concern because the very fibre of the nation seems to be unraveling. Young people, though bearing some of the fault for this condition, have been let down by many of the older generation.

They have been let down at home. Many have houses, but not good homes. Parental delinquency breeds juvenile delinquency. Neither money, social standing, nor any such thing is an adequate substitute for a good home that is governed by spiritual guidance that emphasizes spiritual qualities. There is lack of discipline with many parents not knowing where their children are or what they are doing. Youths are granted liberties usually extended only to adults, and the young are proving themselves incapable of handling these freedoms because they have neither matured nor are they instructed how to choose between right and wrong.

American youth has been butchered by divorce, unwed parents, parental neglect and selfishness of parents who seek their own welfare without regard to the effect on children. American homes have let down American youth in so many instances. But we pass forward.

The schools have not been what they should be. Secularism and materialism has captured the educational scene on every level with few exceptions. The motive for learning is money, power, self, not service. Education has been separated from the guidance of God and morality to the point we have vast hordes of educated animals.

There is probably no one place where the faith of Christ has been under attack for several decades more than in the public and private school systems of this nation. Humanism is the guidepost. That many are becoming aware of the deficiencies of the school systems is one hopeful sign for future improvement. But too much emphasis is on better buildings, equipment and circummuli alongside a negative attitude toward proper behavior.

Failure of the Churches

Youths have been let down by churches. Why are so many young people anti-religious? It is partly because religion has shown so little influence in the lives of older people. It is because Christianity has been so polluted with human doctrines and hypocrisy that the true faith is only discovered with great difficulty. Churches have become so secular, political, recreational, social and economical that they have abandoned the role of emphasizing God, His Word, salvation and the need of being

cleansed of sin.

Young people are let down when they are not taught and shown the proper attitude toward honest labor. We have built a welfare state where many expect hand-outs and think it is their right to get them and feeling cheated if they do not receive them. To rear a person to think the world owes him a living is to maim him for life. So many want to do as little as possible, having no aspiration anything higher than "getting by," or getting it easily. Honesty and doing a good job are not the goals of enough youths. As one has said, "The first thing many young people want to know about a job is the pay, how much vacation, and when can they retire, and with how much." Too many never think about what service they can render in life, or being a benefit in their work others, even earning so they can help. Slothfulness and slackness has been the calling of many. This parasitic attitude has eaten away at the core of honest endeavor. The nation now crawls with leeches who contribute nothing, but seek to siphon away the life blood of others who work.

Wrong Goals

Many youths have been misled to think that a "high standard of living" is the ultimate goal of life and success. Who has learned that enough is as bountiful as an abundance? People feel cheated if they do not have all they want. They seem to think that in spite of the words of Jesus that man does live by bread alone. Some, like the rich fool of Luke twelve, think all is well because they do have plenty. They waste themselves and their resources like the prodigal of Luke fifteen.

Bad Examples

But has the older generation given them the right example to follow? The youths do not own and operate the television stations, instigate the programs, control the radios, movies and newspapers. Who owns and operates the bar rooms, taverns, liquor stores and pornography magazines? Who is really responsible for the teaching that results in the flood of violence, vulgarity, immorality, murder and death so commonplace in our society? Can that be blamed on the youth? Or are the young people more often the dupes which are the victims of the ploys of older ones who seek money anyway they can get it? For money, American adults have sponsored the vilest corruption the world has known and exploited the youth in getting it.

But this gives us sufficient scenes of our present reality. Reviewing shortcomings alone is of little value unless we seek and follow some constructive steps to make our young people modern-day David's, capable of facing modern-day Goliath's.

Every Christian should sense his own duty in this matter. Churches should attack the problem with vigor and determination. Parents must first make their homes Christian, with respect for the Bible, prayer and the God-given foundations upon which a young boy and girl can build the right kind of life. Sincerity, love, insistence on obedience, teaching and showing the way of right can accomplish the good our young people must hear and see.

How to turn the school's negative influence around is hard to prescribe because so much of the power of the educational systems lies in the hands of those who have little to no respect for God and His Word. The hypocrisy rampant in schools operated by those

who say they are Christians is a gigantic barrier to good education. Nelson Bell wrote, "Where godless teachers scoff at the Christian faith, or in other ways try to undermine religion, they should be dismissed for contributing to the delinquency of minors. This should include teachers and all others connected with education." With this thought we would concur, but our diversified society makes this positive and constructive move difficult to achieve. Everybody seemingly has their "right" to curse God, but those who choose to serve Him are cut down.

Many have sought schools operated by men and women of faith instead of what the state offers. This has historically been beneficial, but often today even some of these schools are contaminated with professors and leaders who have drunk deeply from the same foul waters as others and delight in passing along the doctrine that the "old foggy" past must be uprooted and replaced with the "knowledge" of the modern, often skeptical, "scholar." How many years it will take before people get their eyes open and see the fruit being borne cannot be predicted! But may God hasten the day!

The Solution

You may have noticed a lack of Scriptures thus far in the lesson. We have been observing the situation, as it exists. But the one, primary and essential passage relevant to this discussion is Proverbs 22:6, "*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*"

Training is the key to preparing. The home is the basic unit of society and the first training ground. Until the homes have more regard for God's intent for the home we can only expect the situation to continue or grow worse.

The church is to be the "*pillar and ground of the truth.*" Unless the church maintains a strong stance for the truth and against error it renders itself useless for mankind. Why should the church be little more than an echo of the sinful, materialistic and pleasure-seeking world?

Who can possibly know what "giant" stands before our young? Changes occur so rapidly and the world is unstable. Dare we send our children into it unprepared and easy prey for the forces of the devil? We do not want to make the mistake of Saul and declare are them unfit simply because they are young. But we must make sure they are prepared. Our task is before us and our duty is clear. Satan is our foe and God is our helper and strength. Our failure is the doom of our own flesh and blood, but our victory will result in the salvation of us all.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Are there tasks that the young can perform? Name some.
2. Are their limitations upon them while still in their youth?
3. What is a true "high standard of living?"
4. What "giants" do you see standing in the paths of our young?

Parental Government

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates” (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

“And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before your eyes, and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us” (Deuteronomy 6:20-25).

“If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them, then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place, and they shall say unto the elders of the city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice, he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die; so shalt thou put evil away from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear” (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

These verses from the Mosaic Law introduce our theme. They were firm and hard, insisting upon obedience from children and the exercise of parental government in the home. Is there not a need for people today to think on the matter of parental government, seeing the veritable rash of wayward children, disturbed homes, divorces, void of spiritual guidance, and a breakdown of respect for authority?

Two Kinds of Parents

In the first chapters of First Samuel we see two kinds of parental government and the results of each kind. One is that of Eli and the other of Hannah. One proved to be a failure and the other produced blessed results.

It was the obligation of Jewish parents to train their children in the knowledge and respect of God. Failure in this effort was one of the most serious crimes and the punishment for failure was of the greatest magnitude. Now, as then, the family is the fountain of all national life. The hope of the nation is in the families where the young are trained to a pure, holy, pious and righteous way of life. It was incumbent on all parents to be attentive to this duty, especially those of leadership.

This obligation rests upon every father and mother today to see that their children

are brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Failure does not mean the death of the child, as under Moses' Law, but it always means sorrow, grief, worry, punishment, either here or in the hereafter. The family is still the fountain of national life. It is still a sin against society, the child, and God to not train up the child in the way that he should go (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:1-4).

Eli's Failure

While we are taught this duty, not all obey God in doing it. Look at Eli. Generally, he was a good man and faithful in his official priestly duties. But he was radically defective in the government of his family. His children grew up unrestrained, self-willed, indulgent and even irreverent for things holy and divine. They were never guided in the proper values.

Eli's sons were priests because they inherited the duty. They did not care for the people and had little religious interest. They used their position for personal gain, to satisfy their passions, commit adultery and take unfair portions of food for themselves. They brought disgrace and public contempt on their office and their father.

We are not left to wonder what contributed to their misconduct. Eli was responsible. Children sometimes resist the influence of the best of homes, but this is not the rule. Trained properly, they will likely be proper. When children are lawless, corrupt, irreligious and reject Christ we can be fairly certain that there was a sinful neglect in their spiritual training. There are exceptions, but that is the rule.

Training of children consists of more than sending them to Bible study once a week. It demands living before them day by day an exemplary life. Children learn by words, but mostly by deeds. During the formative years many parents have been "too busy" with lesser matters to attend to the spiritual training necessary for their family. Somehow, some seem to think that they can neglect the Word of God, ignore the church, put the world first in their life and still their children will grow up loving God and desiring to live a life that will take them to heaven.

Eli was at fault for not checking the wickedness of his sons. He had the authority to act, but did not. *"For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not"* (First Samuel 3:13). Too many parents ignore the misdeeds of their small children and the children do not learn to abide by parental directions of restraint later. Too many parents run to the defense of their children regardless of what the child does, right or wrong. While we must stand by them when they are wrong, we must stand so that they will know they are wrong and make correction. Too many parents condone the misbehavior of their offspring.

The result was a total failure for Eli, his sons, and even suffering upon the priesthood and Israel. God showed His displeasure with Eli by the judgments placed against him and his family.

Hannah's Success

Look at Hannah, the mother of Samuel. When she was childless she prayed that God would give her a child for God's own sake. *"If thou wilt give thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life..."* (First Samuel 2:11).

Her ambition for her son was that he would be a servant of God. Is not this the ambition that every parent should have for every child? Do we receive our children and train them so that will be the case with them? Hannah kept her promise, and the noble life of Samuel is a reflection of the kind of parents he had. While we are not required to give our children to God in the same fashion as was Hannah's promise, we are to rear our children to the glory of God and that cannot be done short of exercising parental responsibility and power. Samuel was a tower of righteousness in his life. He was a godly man and a leader of Israel for many, many years. The name of Samuel is revered as one of God's most devoted messengers. What a tribute to Hannah!

The Home

The home is where the child is trained. From the home come the business leaders, political people, teachers, labor leaders, religious leaders, etc. The stream will rise no higher than the spring and source. There is always that great need for homes where God, truth, honor, respect, love, work and discipline is very much in evidence. Restraints on ill-behavior that is spasmodic and irregular, brutal and intemperate, will produce more of a savage than a respectable human being. Parents ought never abandon their children to the vice and immoralities of society. The drug problems and juvenile delinquency so rampant among the youth today is directly attributable to parental failure in most instances. Parents have not cultivated in their young the noble aspirations, but urge them on to worldly success and personal satisfaction. Such only leads to ruined lives and hopeless graves. People without training that God directs are frustrated, confused, searching for something and finding no meaning to their existence. They do not know how to cope with life, let alone the spirit.

Possibly the sternness of the Puritan home was too much, but when one compares the results with so much in evidence today, we are inclined to think that, if they erred, they did so on the safest side.

There must be a cultivation and development in the young heart for morality, responsibility, truth and honesty. One of the bitter failures of our present day is basic, fundamental honesty. Until one is taught to love God, he will find no reason to live right and probably will seek out whatever means at his disposal to do whatever he wishes.

Education

We spend so much time, money and energy on "educating" our children regarding the affairs of life, secular matters, worldly matters, and neglect that which far supersedes these things in importance. Children need to learn to make their own decisions, but parents must provide for them the will of God so that they can learn to make intelligent and righteous decisions. Parents have the duty to lead, mold, form that child so he can "stand on his own feet" before God and be acceptable. Parents who do not give their all to this task are failures regardless of whatever else they might accomplish in life. Parents must rear their children so that when the child walks in the ways of his training he will be walking on the road to heaven with God. Anything less is too little.

Judge Sam Davis Tatum, juvenile judge for many years, listed what he considered the six basic causes of teenage delinquency:

- (1) Lack of religious training in the home.

- (2) Petted and pampered children; too much freedom too early.
 - (3) Broken homes; one parent families; and all the attendant insecurity.
 - (4) Consuming intoxicants, often in imitation of parents as well as peers. The easy access to alcohol and drugs.
 - (5) A discordant home where there is nagging, fussing, strife, immorality, profanity, etc.
 - (6) Dictatorial and overly rigid parents, who consider themselves as dictators rather than parents, “laying down the law,” but seldom showing how life is to be lived.
- Parents have a lot to consider, do we not? God help us do our job well.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who did God place over the home?
2. What did the Jews have the obligation to do for their children regarding God’s law?
3. Who exemplifies two kinds of parents?
4. What did Hannah promise regarding her child?
5. When is a person truly educated?
6. From what source is this education primarily to come?

Questions Regarding Marriage, Divorce, And Remarriage

This is a controversial subject, but let us understand something about controversial subjects. It does not mean there is no right and wrong regarding them. It does not mean we cannot know what the truth is. It simply means there is controversy over it, usually because there are those who do not want, will not accept and refuse to admit the truth.

We shall approach the subject by asking questions and allowing the Word of God to provide the answers. When some of us were growing up gospel preachers frequently had lessons on this theme. Possibly the lack of sermons teaching God's truth on the subject is one big reason why many marriages have suffered divorce and many have remarried when they had no right to do so.

When, Where, by Whom?

Where did marriage originate? A reading of Genesis 2:18-25 makes it unmistakable that God is the author of marriage. Marriage is not merely a social arrangement, an economic situation, a legal contract, but a divine institution. It is the oldest of three institutions ordained of God; the three being the home, civil government, and the church. Any and all disposition of marriage must include God. It is not a matter merely between a man and a woman, a husband and a wife. God is involved. The failure to accept this truth is the reason there is so much error being taught and practiced regarding marriage today.

Why?

What are the purposes of marriage? If we were to choose one word above all others to convey the intent of marriage we must choose the word "companionship." The woman is a help meet, or suitable, to man. Marriage partners are to leave all others and cleave to each other. Genesis 2:18 teaches the basic purpose of marriage is companionship.

Procreation, the perpetuation of the human race, is another purpose of marriage (Genesis 1:28). Children are to be born of parents who are married to each other. The home is the basic unit of society. The word "*replenish*" means to stock with persons.

Marriage is to avoid fornication (First Corinthians 7:2,3). God gave us our bodies and the sexual desire for each other. There is nothing evil, sinful or shameful regarding the sexual relationship of husband and wife. However, sexual activity outside of marriage, either pre-marital, extra-marital, whatever, is to defile that which God has made sacred and holy. Fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, lesbians, etc., are violators of the holy intent of God and they turn what God purposed to be a beautiful and pure

relationship into something reprehensible and filthy.

How Long?

What is to be the duration of marriage? First Corinthians 7:39, *“The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord.”* The last phrase refers to another Christian. Marriage is “till death do you part.”

Romans 7:1-4 teaches the duration of marriage is as long they both shall live, and those who would marry another mate while their first mate lives commits adultery. These passages do not take into consideration the one exception which Jesus taught in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, which we shall consider further in the lesson. But the rule in marriage is for life. Nobody ought to enter marriage with any other design or plan.

Divorce

Does God allow divorce? The answer is a qualified, “Yes.” Since much of the remaining part of the lesson centers on Matthew 19:3-9, let us focus attention on it. *“The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them. Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why then did Moses command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”*

Malachi 2:16 reads, *“For the Lord God of Israel saith that he hateth putting away.”* God will allow divorce, but He does not approve of it. Man ought not put asunder what God has joined.

The Exception

God has allowed one exception to the lifetime duration of a marriage. To deny this exception is as erroneous as to ignore it and divorce for any cause. It is an exceptive clause, which conveys the idea that it presents the only allowance God grants for divorce. This is not a contradiction to Romans 7:1-4 or First Corinthians 7:39 because it takes all that the Lord has taught on a subject to have His full truth.

Fornication, which is illicit sexual conduct with one other than one’s mate, such as adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality and incest is the cause for which God will allow the one who is innocent of that sin to divorce the one who is guilty of it.

We note here, and shall explore further, the fact that there are two phrases in Matthew 19:9 and they concern two different people.

What if a person divorces for reasons other than fornication, and marries another? They are living in adultery. That is what the passage teaches. Can one live in adultery?

Paul said they could (Colossians 3:5-7: First Corinthians 6:11). Some object that adultery is an act and one cannot live in an act. But sin is also an act, and one can live in sin (Romans 6:1,2). Sin is not only an act but also a state, a spiritual condition.

Furthermore, the verb phrase "*committeth adultery*" is in the present tense, and in the original language of the New Testament the present tense carries the idea of a continuing action, not just a one-time intercourse. The Bible is clear. Those who divorce have but one justified cause and that is fornication. To remarry when that is not the cause is to live in adultery. Those who teach otherwise teach people to be comforted in their sin.

One cannot think it is acceptable to divorce just so long as there is no remarriage. It is wrong to divorce. "*What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*" That is plain enough. To divorce is wrong unless it is because of fornication. To remarry is another wrong unless the divorce is because of fornication.

The Guilty

Can the person who is guilty of fornication also remarry? It is evident that the one who is not guilty of fornication can remarry. But what of the one whose sin caused the broken marriage? Can he also remarry?

Here is where we must recognize the two phrases of Matthew 19:9. The first phrase concerns the one who puts away a fornicating mate. That person does not commit sin by remarrying. The second phrase concerns the one who is put away because they are guilty of fornication. There is no exception given to that person. There is no right granted to them to remarry. Rather it is stated that they, and the one who marries them, commits adultery. Nothing is clearer than this.

But someone asks, "How can one be loosed from the other and have the right to remarry and the other not be loosed from the one? It seems if one is loosed, both are loosed." It is true that they are loosed from each other, but neither is loosed from the teaching of God. God allows the one not guilty of fornication to remarry, but He does not so allow the one who has committed the fornication that caused the divorce to remarry. They are still tied to God's will even though not to each other.

Forgiveness

If one is divorced for reasons other than fornication, and has remarried, cannot they be forgiven? Yes, they can be forgiven when the terms and conditions of forgiveness are met. Some think that because one has remarried that the marriage must be acceptable to God. Just because the Bible speaks of one as married does not mean that the marriage is approved of God. The Bible speaks of prophets, but not all prophets are approved of God. The Bible speaks of the gospel, but there is a perverted gospel. The Bible speaks of marriages, but not all marriages are what God will accept. One must not assume that a remarriage is acceptable just because it is called a marriage.

One of the conditions of forgiveness of sins is repentance. This demands a change of mind that results in a change of life. One cannot continue in sin and claim to have repented. A liar cannot keep on lying. A thief cannot continue to steal. Nor can one in adultery continue living in adultery. The relationship is sinful and must be abandoned.

But what if one has been baptized since he was divorced and remarried? When

one is baptized past sins are forgiven, but not future sins. Baptism does not change an adulterous relationship into a holy and sacred one. Baptism does not change one's marriageability. Baptism does not make lying into something honorable. It does not make stealing acceptable. It does not make adultery an acceptable marriage.

"Whosoever"

The teaching of Christ regarding marriage applies to all mankind. Some refer to the teaching of Jesus as a "covenant passage," meaning that the teaching only applies to Christians. But Jesus said His will was as God had decreed it "from the beginning." If the teaching of Jesus only applies to the Christian then anybody who is not a Christian does not have to conform to anything the Lord has taught. This is ridiculous. If the Lord's will regarding the sanctity of marriage only applies to the Christian, then anybody who is not a Christian could commit fornication, adultery or any other sin. But we know such a position is absurd. In baptism the blood of Christ washes away sins, but one cannot return to his sins and be thought delivered from his renewed sinfulness (Romans 6:1,2).

But what if children are involved in the second marriage? This is a circumstance that makes matters more difficult, but it does not change the teaching of God. In any divorce, or even the death of a mate, when there are children it makes matters more difficult. We are not insensitive to the hardships involved. But we are not blinded by the emotions that are involved to dismiss the teaching either. Nor does anyone have the right to dismiss the teaching of Christ because children are involved.

We can see this more readily if we consider bigamy, polygamy, homosexuality or some other sinful relationship. We would not entertain the doctrine that one who is guilty of such sins can be baptized and then return to those same sinful relationships acceptably. Then why should anyone think a person could return to adultery? Baptism does not make adultery into a marriage acceptable to God. Those who teach otherwise teach a false doctrine that will cause many who believe and follow it to be lost. Too often religious teachers attempt to accommodate sinful circumstances rather than teach people how to be saved.

Desertion

Is not desertion scriptural grounds for divorce? To be sure, desertion is a sin (First Timothy 5:8). But it is not grounds for divorce. But one asks about First Corinthians 7:15. Let us read the passage. *"But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace."*

What is the "bondage" of this verse? It is a bondage of slavery. It refers to a bondage under which the Christian has not lived to his or her mate. Marriage is not a master-slave relationship. The word translated "bondage" is found 134 times in the New Testament and in the 133 other times it never refers to the marriage bond. But in this chapter the marriage bond is mentioned twice, but with a different word altogether. The marriage bond is from "deo" while the bondage of First Corinthians 7:15 is from "doulou." Should an unbeliever desert his Christian mate the Christian must remember that he is a servant of Christ, and must not abandon Christ simply to hold on to this unbelieving mate. Let him go. One is never so bound to a mate as to be justified in

leaving Christ. Nothing is said of divorce in this chapter, but rather, in the event of separation of a Christian from his or her mate, the admonition is that there are two alternatives open: (1) be reconciled to the mate, or (2) remain unmarried. A divorce and remarriage is not given as an acceptable alternative. Only fornication is the grounds for divorce in the Scriptures.

Should a Christian who is married to a non-Christian leave the non-Christian? The answer is, "No." (First Corinthians 7:12-14). If the non-Christian mate is content to dwell with the Christian, then remain together. If the non-Christian wishes to leave, rather than forsake Christ, the Christian should let them leave. The Christian should bend every effort to convert the unconverted mate (First Peter 3:1,2).

A far better solution to this problem is to marry one who is a Christian. One has calculated that seven out of ten who marry outside the church will eventually leave the church. Only one in six convert their mates. What a spiritual risk to the Christian and to children that may be born into a divided religious home. We cannot overemphasize the extent of folly in marrying outside of Christ.

When Married?

When is one married? This may seem a rather peculiar question, but with the barrage against the very institution of marriage we must consider it. Some have scoffed at marriage, asking, "What difference does a piece of paper make? What difference does a ceremony make? Why not just begin living together?" We would like someone to tell us the difference between whoremongering and living in adultery and fornication and the lifestyle that allows two people to just start living together without the benefit of being married.

The difference between living together and being married is that one is according to God's law and the other is a violation of God's law. That may not make much difference to the ungodly, but it makes a difference to those who respect God. Christians will obey the laws of the land (Romans 13:1; First Peter 2:13,14). God is the One who performed the first "ceremony." A ceremony is bringing one to the other in recognition of a new relationship. God is the first to do this (Genesis 2:22). He saw fit to denote a point when the relationship is a reality, and so should we.

Some have suggested that marriage does not exist until sexually consummated. But if that is true, what you have is two single people coming together into a sexual relationship. That is fornication, not marriage. Sexual relationship is a privilege of marriage, not that which makes one married. Joseph and Mary were married before they came together. If one is not married until there is sexual intercourse, and upon intercourse there is marriage, then every fornicator becomes married when he or she commits fornication. That is absurd.

When the preacher, or whoever performs the ceremony in marriage says, "I pronounce you husband and wife..." then the two are married, not before, and not at some later point. The ceremony is the point of commitment being recognized and the point where the relationship is changed. Should the groom die immediately prior to that pronouncement, the prospective bride is not a widow. But if he dies immediately thereafter, she is a widow. Even the inheritance laws of the land admit this.

Right to Marry

Who has the right of marriage? There are three classes of people who have the right to marry according to God's will. One, those who have never married (First Corinthians 7:36). Two, those who have married but their mates have died (Romans 7:5; First Corinthians 7:39). Three, those who have married but are divorced because they put away their mate because the mate was guilty of fornication. The Scriptures do not grant the privilege of marriage to any others. Respect for this teaching will prevent and resolve many of the marital problems now in existence.

Marriage is not an obligation, but a privilege. One does not sin to marry, nor does one sin to not marry. But if one marries he or she is obligated to obey God's will regulating it. When one is married he or she is obligated to live according to the law governing marriage.

There ought be no division over such an important matter. There is no cause for controversy and no room for compromise. Homes, souls, the eternal destiny of untold numbers of people may well be determined by the acceptance or rejection of the teaching of the Bible regarding marriage.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Where did marriage originate?
2. What are the purposes for marriage?
3. How long are marriages to last?
4. When will God allow divorce?
5. If one divorces for other reasons, is this wrong?
6. If one divorces for other reasons than fornication and remarries, what is the spiritual condition of that person?
7. May one divorce for just any cause provided they do not remarry?
8. What "bondage" is under consideration in 1 Cor. 7:15?
9. When is a person married?
10. Is desertion grounds for divorce?
11. Must there be sexual union before marriage is marriage?
12. Who has the right to marry?

Ready to Meet Goliath

In First Samuel, chapter seventeen, we find the record of one of the greatest battles ever fought between opposing forces. It was a battle of two human beings. The victory was one of the most significant in the history of mankind. Aside from the interest and adventure of this thrilling event, and the impact it had on ancient Israel, it is still useful to us today by providing us with practical lessons and illustrations of truths we need to know and respect. It was the battle between David and Goliath, one of those accounts of the Old Testament "*written for our learning*" (Romans 15:4).

The effect of this struggle was tremendous upon so many. First, there was the nation of Israel. They were again victorious over a historical enemy. Second, the Philistines were affected and driven to a new defeat before the people of God. Third, the effect upon David personally was immeasurable because it sent him rocketing to high praise before the nation. In such a short time he leaped from a mere shepherd lad in Judas to a great warrior and national hero. He embarked upon a career of service before Israel that would occupy the remainder of his life.

The Background

Israel and the Philistines had come to battle as was often the case between these two nations. But instead of going into full warfare as on other occasions, Goliath, a Philistine giant stepped forward with a challenge. "*Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am I not Philistine. and ye the servants to Saul? Choose you a man for you and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants, but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us*" (First Samuel 17: 8,9). He proposed, rather than a wholesale war, a one-on-one fight, winner take all. He would represent Philistia and Israel should choose their man.

The challenge sent fear through the Israelite camp, even to Saul. Meanwhile, David, a shepherd, had been sent by his father with supplies to David's brothers who were in Saul's army. While he was there, he was afforded the opportunity to hear Goliath make his repeated challenge. David inquired what would be done for the man who accepted the challenge and fought the giant to victory. He spoke of taking away the reproach from Israel that had arisen by this giant who defied the armies of the living God.

Eliab, David's older brother, heard David making such remarks and rebuked him telling him he should return home and tend "*those few sheep in the wilderness.*" He accused David of having come just to see the battle.

The Battle

Bible students know well the series of events that followed. David was taken to Saul and after some discussion David was allowed to go meet the giant. Saul offered David his armor but David refused it. He took five smooth stones and his sling. Upon approaching Goliath the giant cursed and ridiculed him, boasting how he would give David's flesh to the fowls. But David responded, "*Thou comest to me with a sword, and*

with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel” (First Samuel 17: 45,46).

The outcome is well known. David finally beheaded the giant, Israel pursued the Philistines and a great victory was won for Israel that day. But our study is not to simply recount these events, but center our attention on another thought suggested in the course of events.

When David was taken to Saul as one who volunteered to fight the giant, Saul would have denied him that opportunity on the basis, *“Thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth”* (First Samuel 17: 33). What preparation did David have for such an undertaking? So much was at stake and the lad was untried with the implements of war.

Being too young is often reason enough not to grant youth to do many things. They should not be expected to discharge adult duties while so immature and inexperienced. It is unfair to them and to others that may have to depend on their performance. But was David without preparation for this encounter? Our ability to meet the foes of life depends how well prepared we are. Battles are lost or won in the preparation stage. Games played on the court or field are in a real sense decided in practice sessions. But our text suggests three great battles David had fought and won prior to meeting Goliath that equipped him for this supreme moment.

Battle of Self

David had won the battle over self. He had self-control and self-confidence, but was not arrogant nor egotistical. He could control his temper under trying and provocative circumstances. He did not allow the ridicule and provocation from his older brother, Eliab, to destroy his confidence nor provoke him to rage. He did not lose his composure when harsh words were thrown at him by the giant. One who was filled with pride, a show-off, with more talk than substance, quick to fly into rage and anger, would have been a misfit for this crucial time. He was neither intimidated, nor did he strut for the applause from others.

When his brother would have stopped him, he simply reasoned, *“What have I done?”* he argued, *“Is there not a cause?”* None could deny that there was a cause. Somebody needed to do something and David merely recognized that. So he persisted in his inquires.

Standing before Goliath he did not cast aside caution and wisdom, but kept a sober and cool head about him, controlling righteous indignation, and did not allow passion to blur his judgment and vision. His hand was steady and his mind unclouded as his vision was clear. He had charge of himself. This is a mark of genuine maturity whether exhibited by the young or old.

Battle of Fear

David had also conquered the battle of fear. *“Let no man’s heart fail because of him,”* said David. Everyone else was afraid, but not David. There was a reason for his

courage. He was not indifferent to the power of Goliath. He did not underestimate nor minimize his enemy. But he was not frightened by him. He had faced danger and possible death before this.

While a shepherd lad tending his sheep a lion and a bear had attacked his sheep. Unlike a mere hireling he rose to the occasion, recovered the sheep and killed the intruding beasts. He knew what it was to risk his life in the line of duty. He knew how to respond when duty called. While cowards cannot be trusted and are likely to cut and run, David knew that to die while doing what needs to be done is victory even if apparent defeat follows. To preserve oneself and neglect duty was worse than death to David. His actions are akin to the words of Jesus. *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it”* (Luke 9: 23,24). His courage was not arrogance, but a trait of character he had developed earlier that made him ready to meet Goliath.

Battle of Unbelief

David had also conquered the battle of unbelief. *“The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, shall deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.”* What a great expression of faith in God! He gave the credit for his former successes to God. David was not relying upon himself, his skill with the sling or his own confidence. He had relied on God in times past and he was doing the same this time. He had the attitude of Paul, *“I can do all things through him that strengtheneth me.”* The reason he had been able to win the battle over self and fear was because he had faith in God. As Paul wrote, *“If the Lord be for us, who can be against us.?”*

Cannot we see that this historical record has many practical lessons for each of us today? We have our own challenges and “Goliaths” in life. There are many things that threaten our peace, happiness, stability, security, purity and faith. We are beset with temptations on every hand. No persons, especially those that love God, are ever free from the constant pressure from Satan to conform to the world, commit sin and “go along to get along.” Peter warned of the devil’s mission in First Peter 5:8, *“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”* The devil is a far more potent foe against us than Goliath was against David. Goliath could only take David’s physical life. The devil can bring us spiritual death. We must be prepared to do battle.

Shall we learn that “with God, we can”? Will we learn to control self, often our worst enemy and weakness? Shall we muster bravery rather than fear, knowing that every temptation has a way of escape because God has provided it for His people (First Corinthians 10:13)? Shall we not remember that temptation is not just an opportunity to sin but also an opportunity to grow by not yielding to it?

With control of mind and temper, having self-confidence with courage, and with faith in God that undergirds it all, no “Goliath” will make us panic into dismay that characterized most of Israel in the long ago. Rather, we shall be like David even when we have what may seem to be inadequate weapons and without the armor of human construction. We will be able to fight the good fight of faith to eternal victory.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What need did David observe?
2. How did Saul consider him at first? Why did he think that way?
3. How did his brothers regard his questions?
4. In what ways was David prepared for this battle?
5. Are there tasks young people ought not attempt? Give reasons for your answer.
6. Are there tasks they can perform? Name some.

Remember Thy Creator

“Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Older people have a love for those who are younger. God loves the young. This passage is primarily directed toward those who are young. It is a challenge to every youth. It is a plea for all young people to turn to the Lord early in life. Let us absorb each thought.

Youth is a very precious and beautiful time of life. Someone has said that youth is so precious that it is a shame it is wasted on young people. We are not of that persuasion because we know that many young people are taking advantage of their youth in the way that God is pleased. But such a comment does reflect the appreciation we all have for youth. It has a purity, spirit, enthusiasm and honesty about it that does not always characterize every period of life. It is priceless and once spent it is forever gone.

Youth Has Problems

We are not to think that being young means being free of problems. The young face many dangers, threats, the need of making decisions and other frustrations that those of us who are no longer young may have forgotten. Older people sometimes talk about what they would give to be young again. But likely they do not remember the hard parts of being young, trying to determine the direction of life and making commitments that must be made.

We sing songs of the grandeur of youth when we sing of the land where we'll never grow old. But even though young people may tire of hearing it said, youth is a time for preparation. In one sense all of life is a time for preparation for the life that is to come. But youth is a time to prepare for a life on earth that is a life of preparation for eternity. This being true it must be used wisely and as God would have it used.

The primary appeal of the gospel is very relevant to youth. Even though people of older years may turn to the Lord and find forgiveness for misspent years, it is to the youth of every generation to which we turn with hope, with deep emotions and goals. We seek for them salvation.

One reason the gospel has such an applicable appeal to youth is because young people have a lifetime to give in service to God. There need not be one day spent in the devil's service after we learn how to come to God. Young people have the opportunity to so live that they can look back on life with great consolation that they served God all the days of life. They need not suffer the agony of conscience and ill-spent years. The evil scars of sin, regret and neglect need not mar their life. They need not sow the “wild oats” of the flesh only to reap a painful harvest later.

Our text suggests three important questions. One, when to remember the Creator? Two, why to remember the Creator? Three, what does it mean to remember the Creator?

When?

With this question we are talking about the age of accountability or that point in the time of one's life when he stands responsible before God for his duty to God. At what age should a young person realize he is answerable to God for himself?

The Scriptures do not designate a certain "birthday" to answer this question. Some have mistakenly assumed that because Jesus was twelve years of age when He went to the temple that twelve is the moment of personal accountability to God. But this is not taught. We are driven to the conclusion that such a time does come, and it comes "*in the days of thy youth.*" We are taught that we all shall stand before God in judgment and "*shall give an account.*" (Second Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:12). The fact that we do become accountable shows that there is a time, at some age, when we are responsible.

We are not accountable in infancy. A little child is not sinful nor guilty of the sins of others. Christ used a little child to picture the nature of those who are in His kingdom, the church, the saved (Matthew 18:2-4; 19:14). If children were condemned and depraved, why would Jesus want anybody to become as children?

Sin is a transgression of the law (First John 3:4). Children have not violated any law of God. We are to be like children by being humble, pure, teachable, obedient and submissive. There is nothing in Scripture to substantiate the total depravity doctrine, people born in sin, being guilty of the sin of Adam or any other foreparent. This is an invention of Augustine, pursued in the heretical creeds of men, promoted by denominations, and serves as the basis for another false practice called "infant baptism." It is a doctrine that is blasphemous of God and contradictory to His revealed will.

Nonetheless, there does come a time when that sweet innocence of youth gives way to accountability before God. It is in youth. But as we must consider how one answers to his accountability, it becomes clear that one must be able to understand his duty and respond to it. To not be able to understand, and not be able to respond, would be to assign accountability to one who could neither know it nor do anything about it. Accountability, therefore, is determined by whether one has the capacity to know and respond to duty. It is not determined by whether he does know or not, but whether he is capable of knowing and responding.

Some may live an entire lifetime and never become accountable due to some mental deficiency. Some may become accountable at a very early age, developing rapidly, even as early as eight or nine years of age. Usually this period of serious contemplation occurs around the age of twelve or the early teen years. It varies with the individuals and no man can set a universal age standard. But it is in the days of youth.

Young people who have reached such an age with normal capacity for learning and knowing but have not yet responded to the invitation of Christ stand in great spiritual danger.

Why?

Why should the young remember their Creator? It is possible that the young never grow older. The young die, too, Opportunity may be taken from them quickly. Death is no stranger to the beautiful bloom of youth. The first funeral I ever tried to conduct was that of a ten year old boy. It impressed me so heavily that death comes to youth. Disease, accident, many things terminate life and opportunity is gone forever. One of the devil's most subtle and vicious lies is, "You have plenty of time yet to obey the gospel."

Delay makes obedience harder. The text tells of evil days that follow the days of youth. Evil has the power to harden the heart. Those that were once tender and moldable

become set and resistant even to the gospel. Waiting can cause indifference. Many things can occur in the course of a person's life that can turn attention away from the soul. Satan is constantly begging the youth to postpone obedience for he knows that delay gives him additional opportunities to deceive and mislead.

Illustration

Charles Spurgeon was a Baptist preacher who preached to thousands every Sunday in London, England. What a pity he preached Baptist doctrine rather than the doctrine of Christ! But, as all denominational preachers, he also taught much truth. (The truth they teach often blinds people to the error they teach). He illustrated the value of remembering the Creator in youth. Without a word he took two candles, one short and one longer, then he lighted them both and watched them burn down. Both gave off the same light as they burned, but it was not long before the shorter candle burned out. The longer one continued to give light on and on. He explained that it was that way with youth coming to God. Both old and young can radiate light, but youth can do so much longer, if for no other reason than by the number of years that they will normally live.

Remembering God in youth gives young people the opportunity to offer talents to the Lord that they will not possess in years to come. They have their enthusiasm, their honesty, their teachable and they can set a good example for other young people. Is it right to withhold from God your life, living as you please until you grow old and then give Him only the "leftovers"? If "leftovers" is all one has he best hasten to offer them to God. But what of that person who would deliberately shortchange God in that fashion? The glorious treasure of zeal and vigor belong to God. Nobody ever loses anything valuable in serving God. You only come to appreciate them more, use them to the fullest, and thereby enjoy the richest, happiest and most useful life one can live on earth.

We must ever keep before us the reality of the promise of the Lord's return. We know not when. He may come before a young person grows to maturity. Even the young ought to want to meet Him prepared.

What Does it Mean?

What does it mean to remember thy Creator? Generally speaking it means to be mindful of God and His ways. More specifically it means to realize that we all live before God under the authority of Christ. Christ is the approach to the Father (John 14:6). There is no other (Acts 4:12). To honor God means to honor the Father and the Son (First John 2:23). To deny the Son is not to have the Father (First John 2:23). To remember God means to honor the Son (John 5:23). To deny the Son is to not have the Father (First John 2:23). To remember God means to be a Christian.

It means that one must believe in Christ as God's Son (John 8:24), repent of sins (Luke 13:3), confess faith in Christ (Luke 12:8,9), and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Galatians 3:27; Acts 2:38). It means to belong to His body, the church (Acts 2:47). Being in Christ is the same as being in His body which is the church (Ephesians 1:22,23).

It means living a faithful life as a Christian, imitating the Lord Jesus, asking, "What would Christ have me do?" This demands a life of service, worship, unselfishness, humility, truthfulness, purity, submission to His will, thankfulness, patience, kindness, goodness and all the other Christlike qualities that Christians are to add to their life.

Too Young?

An oft asked question regarding these matters is, “Is there not a danger of encouraging young people to respond to the invitation of Christ while they are too young?” The answer is obviously, “Yes.” That danger does exist. But we must also remember the danger of discouraging them too long. It is not an easy matter to face either way, but if we err, let us err on the side of safety.

Actually, one cannot obey if “too young.” They might go through outward motions, but obedience must be from the heart (Romans 6:16-18) and that demands understanding. If one has gone through outward motions, being baptized, but without knowledge and understanding of that which was done, he or she has simply been made wet. This can be distracting and deceitful and therein is the danger. It may lead some youth to postpone genuine obedience because they think all is well simply because they went through some ritual years ago even though they did not comprehend it. We must do our best to make sure that the young are taught and that they know and understand what they are doing.

Whenever this question is raised I think of a friend with whom I was reared. He and I wanted to obey the gospel at the same time. We agreed to talk with our parents first since we both respected our parents. We valued their guidance. My parents encouraged me while his discouraged him. He was crushed, but would not go against their decision. While I went ahead and obeyed, to this day, over forty years later, he has never obeyed the gospel and likely never shall. This shows the danger on the other side.

Parental Duty

When one who is very young responds to be baptized it places a great obligation on parents and the church to see that this young babe in Christ is properly nurtured, fed, strengthened and led aright. But accountability is a matter of understanding and the capacity to understand. If a mistake is made and response is made before proper understanding is achieved, likely, with the right kind of guidance from older ones, correction of that mistake will take place later. But what happens if one is turned away forever?

To delay can well mean eternal condemnation. Better to heed the inspired teaching of Solomon and remember the Creator in youth, leaving room for growth and making sure that growth follows. Souls are too precious to deal with them otherwise.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. To whom are the words of Ecclesiastes 12:1 addressed?
2. Why does the gospel have a special appeal to youth?
3. When should one remember the Creator?
4. Why should one remember the Creator?
5. What does it mean to remember the Creator?
6. Discuss the question, “Is it possible to obey the gospel too young?”
7. What is required to be obedient?
8. How can mistakes that are made in this matter be corrected?
9. Whose duty is it to guide the youth in this matter?

Responsibility To Tomorrow

If you have concern for the future and are interested in the young and if you want to know the solution to the ills of mankind, you will be interested in this lesson. We ask and answer four overriding and all important questions pertaining to the responsibility we have right now to the tomorrow that may yet be. *"He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good"* (Proverbs 16:20). Sometimes we emphasize the present to the neglect of the future and are not wise. But how could we overemphasize the importance of the young, the future of the church, the molding of lives and the saving of souls? What is our responsibility to that period of time which we call the future?

The Future

First, we ask, wherein lies the hope for the future? We suggest it lies in the proper training of the young. *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6). One of the themes of the faith of Christ is that of hope. 1 Tim 1:1 tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ is our hope. Without God there is no hope (Ephesians 1:18), but with God there is hope. That longest of all of the Psalms, and a great chapter giving emphasis on the Word of God, shows where the inspired Psalmist placed his hope. *"I hope in thy word"* (Psalm 119:49,81,114). What is the hope for the future of mankind? Wherein lies the answer to the problems he faces? It is training the young to follow the Christ of whom we read in the Word of God. Yes, we quickly answer that the hope of all is in the Lord. But how strongly do we really believe it?

Nobody can deny that the world has momentous problems such as war or peace, fear or security, life or death, sin or wickedness, good or evil. These things are manifested in racial, economic, social, political, and moral tensions, nationally and internationally. Can we really look to armies and navies, the ability to manufacture material goods, scientific knowledge and discoveries? Can we even look to churches? So many religious beliefs have brought people to the morbid state of paganism, superstition, Romanism, communism, modernism, heathenism. These things have been able to overpower the minds and lives of millions even in the land of Bibles. Has there ever been a time when these things have proved adequate? No, never in man's history.

Only One to Whom We Can Go

In the long ago, when some were turning away from Christ, He asked His disciples if they would also go away. *"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life"* (John 6:68). The hope of the world lies in the Son of God. *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me."* (John 14:6). Paul urged, *"Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel"* (Col. 1:23). Our hope lies in the church, inasmuch as it is the work of the church to proclaim and uphold this truth. *"The church is the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1 Tim. 3:15). Since the church is composed of saved people, those like me and you who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and are members of His body (1 Cor. 12:27), does it not sober you to think that we are the hope for the future? Yes, although this may sound

on the surface to be making ourselves more important to the world than we are, it is true. But it is glaringly apparent that we have little impact on the world.

The Church and Tomorrow

This leads us to a related question: How is it that the church is the hope for tomorrow? Why do we say the church is the hope? It is growing more and more apparent among all the inhabitants of our earth that people must learn to live together or die and be destroyed together. Man's genius has invented many things and discovered many ways of bringing people "closer" together. We must learn to get along with each other. But among man's amazing discoveries are ways and means of wiping out the real progress of ages past by weapons and destructive powers that would destroy civilization if turned loose. This is not an overstatement nor idle words. Not only have men produced weapons but also philosophies and ideologies that would destroy the dignity of mankind and reduce him to nothing more than a highly evolved and powerfully destructive animal. While we must look as much as we can to the future with confidence, we also must be realistic.

Man has devised all manner of treaties, pacts, agreements, alliances, world federations and balances of power which have proven to have some usefulness to prevent the takeover of the world by savage elements. But none of these things are successful because they are based on the wisdom and merit of humans. Many have not adopted nor lived up to the agreements put forth. Only when the minds and hearts of men are changed can there be what humanity needs. Only Christianity is the perfect peace plan. This is because this is the faith that came from God our Creator that was designed and delivered to the entire race. He knows what is best for His creatures. It is the plan that cleanses man from his sinfulness and makes them brethren on the basis of love one for the other in the same Savior.

The Young Must Be Trained

When we realize how dependent the future is on the training of the young to follow the Christ that is revealed in the Scriptures and that it is the work of the church to proclaim that very Christ, it behooves us to ask what will be the church of tomorrow? What will be its composition? The answer is that it will still be composed of a redeemed and peculiar people. It will be composed by the same people that may become the owners of businesses, heads of governments and members of homes. In but a few short years the world will be overtaken by another generation. Those who will be making decisions regarding our world are now mere children, eager to learn, subject to training and impressionable. Those who lead now were children only a short while ago. Each one could have been taught Christ as easily as they have been taught greed, power, hate, war, godlessness, etc. History could have been different and far better. But the past is gone never to be changed. But what of tomorrow? Tomorrow's people can still be taught and impressed with good, with Christ, with His church. History can be made better through the proper guidance of the young today. The Lord's church can have an impact on the future generations.

Some have a very pessimistic attitude toward the youth of today. This kind of attitude has probably always existed. We do not minimize the evil ways so profound

among the young of our time. We are told that ninety-five per cent of the college age people of our nation never read the Bible. This is not good. The crimes of the nation are mostly committed by the young. The rampaging immorality is among youth, being promoted and exploited by those who are older. But we must remember that the youth of today is just about what the adults of today have taught them and led them to be. The responsibility lies upon the older generation to teach and discipline and instruct the young as well as the younger generation having the duty to respond to that training. It is to the benefit of the young to give heed to the things they are taught because it is their world that shall be determined by these things as well as our own.

What Training Includes

To train means to lead; not just to drive. It means to direct the growth, not allowing the youth to set the course and determine each step. God gave young people parents for a purpose, but many parents have forsaken their duties, failed to guide the development of their young and we are reaping the hell and havoc that neglect produces. We have the duty before God and man to instruct, discipline, educate and set the right example before the young. We believe the Scripture when it teaches that a rightly trained young person, when he lives according to his training, will not depart from those righteous ways when he grows older.

We often visit the hospitals to see the newborn. As we look upon that little creature in the nursery bed we are made to wonder, "What kind of person will that baby grow to be? What kind of life will he or she lead? Are we looking upon a future drunkard, a murderer, an infidel, a dope addict, a parasite on society, a soul that will be lost because of its sins? What kind of influence will that person have on those near him? Could this be a world leader? Are we looking at one whose life will contribute to the improvement and service of mankind? Will this baby be a Christian? Will he, or she, have the respect for morality, property, and others?" All this depends largely upon what kind of training that baby will receive. It depends upon those who have the responsibility to train that child and steer his, or her, upbringing.

Someone wrote, "The lesson of Samuel and his sons is a clear demonstration of the fact that virtue is not acquired by inheritance. Samuel's sons did not possess the character of the father. Goodness is no more hereditary than evil. Children neither inherit the good or the bad characters of their parents. Principles of character are instilled through teaching only."

Teaching Character

Christian principles of character are taught. We emphasize so much secular education and there is room for this emphasis. Every child is required to go to school. Millions are spent each year in this endeavor of educating. There is constant planning, improving of facilities, expanding buildings, time, thought, money, work, training; an on-going process. But what are they learning? What is being taught? We so often have left out, ruled out and neglected the most important matters. The spiritual education of the young is far more important than any other education. Moral training is what keeps humans from behaving like wild beasts. Secular education, at best, can only help the young provide a place for himself in this life in the temporal and material world that will

be gone after a short while. One can have all that and never be what he ought and can be. Spiritual training is what makes life livable. Without it we live in a jungle of vile evil. Only by rearing the people of the future in the nurture and admonition of the Lord can there be meaning and purpose for life and for eternity. Without spirituality life has no reason for existence. Yet, this side of training is what goes wanting.

Our fourth question then naturally follows: Where does the responsibility lie for the spiritual training of young people? *“Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath but bring them up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4). Parents, the home is where it must begin and continue through the formative years of the child. When the home is not as it ought to be, when this training is neglected and many times left out altogether, when the home is shattered by hate, strife, immorality, godlessness, separation and divorce, what can be expected except young people who go the way of hell rather than the way of God? There is no way to overemphasize the duty of the home in the proper training of the young. When the home fails, you have only produced more problem makers and sordid lives.

The church has the duty to teach the young as well as all in the world. These two divine institutions, the home and the church, both coming from the mind of God, must and should work harmoniously and consistently in presenting by word and deed the way that youth should go.

Bible Knowledge

Our young need to learn the Bible stories, to be encouraged to study the Bible, to be shown why there must be respect for God, His Word, His church. Families need to pray together, obey God together, live God’s way together. If we would only train our young so much agony and human misery could be avoided and prevented. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. It is much better to build a boy than mend a man. A wise home and church will be very attentive to the training of the youth. It will not be the emphasis of the church to provide the recreation, entertainment and secular education for the young, but the spiritual and moral guidance and teaching. This is God’s plan. The affairs of the young must be guided primarily from the home. The duty rests squarely on the shoulders of parents, teachers, preachers, elders, and deacons. The church’s attitude toward the young is all important. They will not care what you think until they think you care. Our efforts to guide the youth to Christ should occupy the place of primacy in dealing with the oncoming generation.

Shall we allow the stumbling blocks of ignorance of God’s will continue to hinder the path of our precious children? Shall we spare what is required of ourselves, our means, our time, energies and thoughts, to give them that which is more needful than all other things combined; namely, a saving faith in God and the divine guidance for their lives?

I can think of nothing more consuming of my thoughts, and embraced in my prayers, than that my children walked before God acceptable to Him. If this is accomplished every failure will pale into insignificance and every other success will be minor. This is what matters. May it be so!

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Wherein lies the hope of the future?
2. Who is the only One to Whom we can go?
3. How is it that the church holds the future?
4. Discuss: The young are the church of tomorrow.
5. Where lies the responsibility for training the young?
6. Name some of the matters that training includes.

Sources Of Youth's Problems

To say that the youth of our land face many problems is not to reveal anything new. Every generation of youth has faced problems. But this particular era of our nation's history seems to offer the young problems that were not always that pressing on some other ages. Their problems seem to be more dominant, if not of different kinds, than some before them have had to face. Everywhere we see the young confused, frustrated, involved in riots, rebellion against authority, steeped in crime and the age is characterized by suicide. Certainly this is not true of all the youth, but it is true of a distressingly large number of them. Juvenile delinquency was a problem when I was growing up, but the proportions of misconduct have reached epidemic levels. Just yesterday on the news reports (April 7, 1982), one explanation for a slight decrease in the crime rate was that there are proportionately fewer young people. This is a sad commentary on the youth of the land. But we are inclined not to place the full blame for this deplorable state of affairs on the young.

In Genesis 42:22, *"And Reuben answered them saying, Spake not I unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold, also his blood is required."* Reuben had urged his brothers not to mistreat their younger brother, Joseph, but they paid him no attention. It is possible for those who are older to sin against the younger. Those who have the responsibility of caring for the young are often guilty of sinning against the very ones for whom they have the watchcare. A child is not born into the world wicked, evil and delinquent. He learns to be that way. He is taught to become that way. It does not come from within himself. In this lesson we want to locate some of the present day sources of problems for the young.

Many Fine Youth

We first need to emphasize that all young people have not gone and are not "going to the dogs." Not all are long-haired, beer drinking, dope taking, immoral and degenerate rabble. Experience with young people over the past many years convinces me that many are fine, stalwart, strong, serious and well-intentioned Christians. True, even some of these are misled by others into ways that are not for the child of God. But there are those who shall stand for the faith as much as any adult.

But many have serious problems and guidance is sorely needed, if they will give it a fair chance. We who are older need to consider more closely the problems of the young and work for them and with them to overcome them rather than simply hope that everything will work out all right. Too many of the older generation have played Pilate and washed their hands of the youth as if nothing can be done. For the sake of the good young people we need to do something to correct the trends of godlessness that have come so heavily upon the youth of the land. We need to treat the sources and causes of these problems rather than simply wail over the symptoms. While the problems are sometimes complex and not easily resolved, the major causes of the problems are not really that far beneath the surface.

The Home

The number one source of youth's problems is the home. Where there ought to be security, love, provision, guidance, standards, discipline, hope and example, there is often just the opposite. Home has become not much more than a temporary filling station for many families. Respect for this divine institution has been undermined by many. The proverb, "*Train up a child in the way that he should go*," is primarily directed to parents. "*Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,*" is the medicine needed (Ephesians 6:4). Children are learning to disrespect their parents and many times it is because the parents have not been respectable. Parents are too busy making money, reliving their own youth, and having a good time to be parents. The modern idea of motherhood is to have a career outside the home and leave the rearing of the children with somebody else. In most cases where there is trouble with children you will find mother was outside the home, being the "liberated and modern" woman, but one who has sacrificed her primary role for the paltry offering of a sinful world. Let all the society holler and cry that it does not make any difference, but the fruit produced shows otherwise.

Children learn disrespect for authority in the home. It carries into the school, against civil government, against God. Keeping the home is the noblest work of women and because that has been smeared in the minds of so many, the children suffer.

Parents

It is rather difficult for a child to grow up with stability when the two people the child loves most hate and despise each other, and show it. Divorce has created problems for youth that can never, ever, be erased. The selfishness of parents, seeking their own, has placed the welfare of the child on the "back burner." In homes where father and mother and child learn to love God and each other and are regular in worship, there are few cases of juvenile delinquency, very few and rare. Children that come from divided homes suffer all kinds of maladjustment, unhappiness, confusion, insecurity, and build resentment and frustration. J. Edgar Hoover said, "Almost invariably parents are to blame for the development of young criminals." We can add that almost invariably parents are to blame for their children not becoming Christians. They have not taught them, set the right example before them, considered their inconsistencies of no consequence, and as a result, son and daughter either never become Christians or leave the church shortly after leaving home

We read about neglected children and it touches the heart. But any child that is not taught the way of the Lord, and does not have parents that try to live the way of Christ before them, is a neglected child. We can all be grateful for the homes where God reigns supreme.

Schools

Problems are caused for the young by the schools. While we have a great appreciation for school teachers generally, there are those who are servants of the devil. This is not because they are unfair, or poor teachers, but because of what they teach and

promote. While many can credit their teachers with a large measure of their personal success, many others can credit their teachers with their problems also. I have long considered the public education system to be one of the greatest enemies of the truth of God and His church because of some of the things done to the young in these schools. I once thought “Christian schools” were the answer, but more and more, because of the false doctrines and false doctors in these schools we have to consider them as one of the primary sources through which digression is pouring into the church. Just what is the remedy for such things I am not quite sure. But the problem is obvious.

Many teachers on nearly every level make fun of religion. They have often been trained in humanism, atheism, skepticism, and they teach this in their classrooms. Many teachers consider religion just a haven for the weak and timid of the world. Some textbooks even state such. False theories are taught as truth, theories that contradict Biblical teaching. Great effort is made by some teachers to destroy any confidence the young may have in the Bible. Evolution and humanism are the primary guiding principles governing education in most schools. This is why there has been a veritable rash of private schools arising. It has not been so much the hatred of racial integration, as some would have us believe, as it is the disgust of God-fearing parents with God-hating teachers.

You teach a child that he comes from an animal, and he will likely act like one. Teach him he comes from God and he will aspire to be like God. Morality is scorned, drug use is prominent, peer pressure is detrimental, and so often the social events are designed to promote the worldliness that the Scripture condemns, such as drinking, dancing, lasciviousness, etc. Even the emphasis for getting an education is to get more money rather than be able to be of more service.

Administrators and teachers have become so sensitive to the demands of the “experts” and the so-called “scholars” that God and His ways have just about “flunked out” in so many schools. This has a damning influence on the young who are exposed to this environment

The Media

None who are informed doubt the harmful effects of radio and television on the youth. Freedom of the press has been so abused as to include every kind of glamorization of sin. The youth are exposed to the lurid, lewd and obscene as if it should be socially acceptable. Pornography has become a present-day rage. Have you ever checked the magazine racks near campuses? For the love of money, merchants will sell anything, and the undisciplined, immoral, anti-Christian youth will buy it, absorb it, practice it. The movies appeal to the young with all manner of vile and corrupt pictures. The level of vulgarity that once was reserved for the backroom and houses of ill-repute are now blatantly and openly placed on the screen publicly.

The writers wallow in the mire of murder, rape, brutality, sexual immorality, theft, etc. Their minds must be “garbage pits” considering what comes out of them. The criminal is exalted, the divorced are the heroes, fornication is the norm, drunkenness is everywhere, and you cannot hear a program almost anywhere without profanity and obscenity. Do you really think this has no effect on the young impressionable mind as he hears this day in and day out? The addiction to television has about destroyed the thinking capacity of many people already, and replaced it with them becoming mere

buckets into which the money-makers pour their filth for the dollar's sake. Let the television industry disclaim responsibility all they wish. They have lied so often, acted irresponsibly too many times, refused to face the facts and really just do not care so long as they get their money. What we think comes more from what we see than any other one source. *"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."* From what we are seeing in movies, on television, in magazines, etc., we can understand why the thinking of so many is so sordid.

Know The Difference

It is the responsibility of Christian parents to make sure that their young people know the difference between these sinful ways of the world and the way of Christ. Permissiveness and tolerance toward such things is going to cause many young people to degrade themselves and so stain their hearts and lives that only hell can burn away their evil. Is it not a shame that these marvelous means of communication cannot rise to a higher level than what is generally characteristic?

The Government

The government must assume some blame for the problems of the youth. The ambitious and unscrupulous politicians have so fouled up much of the business of the nation that the young are "turned off" from being responsible citizens. The greed, graft, and personal gain of the nation's leaders have set a terrible example before the young. Power, popularity, and profit have dominated the careers of governmental leaders. Wars are even provoked for the sake of gain, and the lives of the young are disrupted, if not totally sacrificed.

Someone has said that three parties govern our land; the Republican, Democratic, and cocktail. How much of the nation's business is conducted by people under the influence of the alcoholic beverage? Sometimes you would think that everything has come from the mind of a drunk. Statesmen are few and far between, and their voices often drowned out by the lying, immoral, double-dealing, insincere power hungry politicians. Our young see these things, and it does them harm.

Government has too long set the example of living beyond its means. It has for too long rewarded the immoral with support, the trifling, and lazy with food and shelter. It has interfered with the homes by trying to influence and dictate concerning matters that belong to the home, not the government. All such things complicate the lives of the young. What a tragic shame that the government has so often thrown its weight behind such movements as the feminists that would defame God and His ways. Now the legitimacy of killing unborn children is sanctioned by the government. It ought not be, but the forces of righteousness are often in a "to-the-death" battle with the power and influences of government.

Churches a Problem?

But where you would expect to find solutions to the problems facing the young, you often find another source of problems, and that is religion, even the church. Can it be that the churches of our land are causing the problems many are facing? Yes, the

confusion, compromises, division, inconsistency, the charlatans, modernism, social gospel advocates, have so polluted what is called “Christianity” until those who have any sense of decency and consistency are repulsed by it.

Atheism is growing rampantly in this land. One of the causes is the division of denominationalism. Men have loved their churches, creeds, doctrines, power, money, etc. more than the revealed will of God. With all the varied voices shouting this and that, what are the young to think? What is anybody to think? If God is behind all this, He is more confused than most of us. Why turn to Him? But God is not behind it, but is opposed to it. What exists is not what God has commanded. Men are going their own way, not the way of the Lord.

Churches have so changed their doctrines to accommodate sin, like divorce, drinking, immorality, etc. that the churches are more governed by the world than having an influence in the world for good. It is commonplace for churches to sponsor gambling and dancing. Some churches are involved in politics and business ventures, even the business of producing whiskey, wine, beer, cigarettes, etc. Civil disobedience against laws that have no moral persuasion whatever has been instigated and actively pursued by religious leaders. Rebellion against authority has been the watchword in recent times by the very ones who have forsaken the authority of God for their own authority.

Worldliness

Immodest dress, smoking, drinking, cursing, multi-marriages, empty pews, have even invaded the Lord’s church in large measure. Whereas churches of Christ were once known for their opposition to sin, in so many places there is such a compromise with it you had just as soon not have anything to do with such congregations. They have become nothing more than a poor man’s country club and the gospel is hard to come by.

Problems, problems, problems. Distressing to consider them, isn’t it? But the solution is still God’s truth. We cannot answer for every home, school, media, government, and church. But we will answer for what we do, and don’t do. Why we keep placing these stumbling blocks before our young is hard to figure. But we have the task of paving the way as much as we can, removing the stumbling blocks when we can, and teaching and showing the young how to avoid and overcome such things that cannot be totally removed from the scene.

They Are Not Adults

Young people are not just little adults. They are young people that need the love, guidance, training, discipline and security that those who are older are obligated to provide. Once given those things it is up to them to walk accordingly. God has given the young parents for some reason. It is past time for many of us to find what those reasons are and get on with the divine task of rearing the young in God’s way. It is not enough to simply tell the young, “Don’t, don’t, don’t.” There must be the provision for the good that they can and should do. The problems are too big for the inexperienced and untrained youth to handle alone. Possibly we need to “get off his back” and “walk by his side.” Every child deserves the teaching of Christ and a Christlike example. That is the only solution to youth’s problems. Be a “solution,” not a “source” of problems.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How can the home be the source of youth's problems?
2. In what ways is government a source of youth's problems?
3. Are churches often problems for them? How is this?
4. What does the world present to them that gives them problems?
5. Can you name ways the schools make problems for the youth?

The Blessings Of A Christian Family

Being a member of a family is something that most of us have in common. All have been and are now a part of some family although many are estranged from the family. We wear family names, have family memories, and backgrounds. Not everyone has pleasant recollections of their family, but for most people the concept of the family arouses thoughts of love and closeness. How sad this is not always the case.

Those of us who are married can recall the very special day that was our wedding day. We stood before a gospel preacher and pledged our lives and love to one we had chosen for our companion in life and who had chosen us in return. We recall the exciting preparations and even the nervousness and happiness of the hour of the ceremony. We especially hear in our mind that moment when we were asked, “Do you take this one whose hand you hold to be your lawful wedded mate, to live together after God’s ordinance in the holy estate marriage? Do you promise to love, honor and cherish her, sickness and in health, adversity and prosperity, and do promise to forsake all others and keep thyself unto her alone as long you both shall live?” Then came the very sincere and response, “I do.” A similar promise was made by the mate-to-be with respect to you. Such memories are sacred. The promises are sacred. Upon them, as the teaching of God declares, another home came into being and was founded.

To those who are not yet married we want to say and hope, if it be your desire, that you will someday find someone worthy of your love and you will be worthy of their love in return. We hope that someday, before God and loved ones, you will make your promises for life. The decision to marry is the second most important decisions in a person’s life, second only to the decision to be spiritually wedded to Christ. It is most unfortunate that too few consider it so.

According to God’s Word

To have a marriage as it ought to be God’s Word must be consulted, His favors sought through obedience and prayer and the will of Christ to rule. No home, however successful in other ways that it might become, can ever attain the fullest measure of joy and divine approval that it ought to have until it is truly a Christian home.

Therefore, we urge with insistence to the unmarried that they marry a Christian, marry for life, and marry in view of eternity. It is far better to remain unmarried than to marry into a relationship that will cause the condemnation of your soul and the souls of others, especially prospective children.

Blessings Await

There are indescribable blessings awaiting those who enter and remain in a Christian marriage and Christian home. One blessing is companionship. Genesis 2: 18-25, God's revelation of the origin of the home tells us, "*It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.*" Another word to describe this companionship is love, a love that sweetens with every passing day and year. It ripens and seasons the longer you remain together. Robert Browning wrote, "Grow old along with me, the best it yet to be: the last of life for which the first was made."

Not only is this husband-wife companionship enriched, but there is no value that can be placed on the Christian companionship that surpasses the blessings of children and grandchildren. Is it not wonderful to hold your child in your lap, even wipe away a tear from his or her face? It is thrilling to take your little daughter's hand and lead her safely across the street? How do you put a price on talking to and working with a precious son? When they have grown to manhood and womanhood and stand tall and straight before God, how can you express your gratitude sufficiently? I do not wish to imply that one must marry and have children to know the meaning of love, even some aspects of family love. I am simply trying to magnify the blessings of family and convey the thought that family life, with mate and children, provides one of humankind's most basic needs and blessings. The need to be needed and loved and the need to love another is found in the family. We cannot reach full happiness apart from genuine love. In this context consider First Corinthians 13:4-8, 13, "*Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth... And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*" The easiest place to find these qualities is within the framework of a Christian home and family.

Opportunities Unlimited

A second blessing of a Christian family is the opportunity to enlarge our experiences, interest and knowledge especially in matters of a spiritual nature. As a family we are one unit. But we remain individuals with varying interests and talents. Even in the mundane and secular realm we have different interests, but as a family we can share them with each other and grow closer together as a result. I never cared much for fishing (just waiting until some fish decides to act) because I had rather instigate than wait. But what a joy it was to go fishing with some of my children and see them enjoy themselves.

Christians have consideration for each other and try to encourage one another in those things that contribute to a useful life. Members of the family "work" to make life pleasant and profitable for each other. They have a similar goal in life, the same standards, and can be of immeasurable assistance each other in pursuing the activities of life within the bounds of Christianity. Nowhere does the common concern for another blossom more beautifully than among the members Christian family, all working with and for one another. To be with those of a kindred spirit is a benefit that strengthens satisfies in a way nothing else can do.

Needs Met

Christian marriage provides for mankind's biological needs. God created us with certain drives and appetites, such as hunger, sexual desires, etc. In marriage, and exclusively marriage, is the sexual desire for a mate to be gratified. Furthermore, with each member of the family fulfilling specific roles provisions of a physical nature are provided. Parents provide for their children. The breadwinner's labors provide for the family. God knew what makes the human happy and He gave us the home.

A tragedy of our time is the extensive degree of indifference many have toward the nobility, honor, sacredness and sanctity of marriage. It is entered into lightly and lived within flippantly. Promiscuous sexual activity outside of marriage has become a national scandal. What the world calls pre-marital and extra-marital affairs are nothing less than outright fornication and adultery that damns the souls of those who commit it. "Sexual activity" is the code word for the unmarried who do not respect God's law. What has been the fruit of such degenerate conduct? We see broken homes, children neglected, morality and self-respect dipping to a low ebb, unwanted children, abortions, diseases that are rampant. It would seem that people who claim to be intelligent could see the devastation their disregard of God's way produces and then cease their sinful manner. In a Christian home there is a loving respect for God's standard of morality and the joy that comes from following God's way is what separates Christians from the servants of Satan.

Security

The Christian home provides a sense of security for the members of the home. So many problems of life arise from a feeling of insecurity. A large portion of this insecurity among children is because parents are "too busy" seeking their own interests and ambitions without due regard for their responsibility toward their child. Even though it is not a popular thing for which to contend in our time, it still needs to be said and I have no hesitancy to say it: Mothers who leave the home, seeking their careers outside the home, working more because of greed than need, and turning their children over to the care and rearing of others, have produced a generation of untaught, insecure, floundering, wondering, unstable, misguided and bewildered young people. Is money worth what the mother away from home is costing? We deny that it is. We are not opposed to women working outside the home per se. We are strongly opposed to wives and mothers neglecting their primary duty to the home and family regardless of what provokes it. With the abundance and luxuries we see in so many homes where wife and mother work outside the home we are not persuaded that need has caused abandonment of the home for the factory and office, but a selfish quest for personal careers and ambitions for materialism.

United We Stand

Everyone in the home needs to know they are cared for and the members of the family stand together. Let the husbands provide (First Timothy 5:8) and let the wives attend to the home (Titus 2:4,5). You may not like this formula but time proves it works best. You may not have as much of this world's goods, but you will more than likely

have an overflow of what God calls good. Rather than considering the performance of work and duty in the home as degrading and second class, as some would have our wives and daughters to think, caring for the home, children and attending to the provision of the mental and emotional security which they are capable of providing, it is the noblest and most productive career a woman can have. The tide of secularism has played havoc with homes over the land, but the Christian home holds firm to God's ways and puts first things first with every member of the family gaining from it.

With there being so many things that threaten and intimidate out there in the sinful world, with so many challenges, with injustices and disappointments abounding everywhere, the Christian home is a harbor of safety from the outside world. At home each member will find guidance, encouragement, support and will know the family stands by them and with them come what may. We have to be so careful when in public as we strive with the pressures, stresses and strains that are commonplace. But home is where we can take refuge from that if and when the home is as it ought to be. There others sympathize and assist each other over the bumps in the road of life. What a blessing to have such a home!

This does not imply we can be uncaring about how we behave at home. It implies the opposite. As one little girl said, after being away from home visiting others for several days, "It is nice to be home where I don't always have to try to be so nice." We do not infer that rudeness and indifference should be allowed in the home. But the home should be where you can "unwind" and be with those who understand and care. This may be one of the reasons people love being at home and with their families.

Everybody Helps Everybody

The most significant blessing of a Christian home is that it provides a relationship where everybody is helping everybody else to get to heaven. This is the prime goal of marriage and the intent of a Christian marriage. Fathers, mothers, children, all laboring together make sure that the circle of the family will not be broken around the throne of God. We are members of God's spiritual family (Romans 8:14,16), as His sons and daughters. God pictures His people as a family relationship. He originated our earthly families and as surely as we are to help all our brethren to go to heaven, even more are we to help our kin to see God in His glory at the last day.

Those who have had a Christian family know the blessings. Many who have been deprived for one reason or another from having such a home have missed so much. Many of them recognize their loss. That is why they have committed themselves to provide a Christian home for their mate and children. We dare not waste the golden years of family life whatever be the stage in which we are living; whether recently married, with young children, grown children, or back to Mom and Dad alone again. Even when our home may include aunts, uncles, in-laws, cousins, brothers or sisters, we all should use our influence to let Christ reign over the home. Those who succeed in having such a home will forever praise the Lord above for the blessings it provides.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What must be consulted if we are to have a marriage as it ought to be?
2. What are the advantages of marrying a Christian?
3. What are the risks of marrying outside the Lord's church?
4. Name the blessings of a Christian home and family.

The Blessedness of a Christian Home

Two lengthy passages should be read as the introduction to this lesson: Genesis 2:18-25 and Matthew 19:1-8. Both are specifically emphatic regarding the subject under consideration and provide the Biblical foundation for the conclusions we must accept.

There are so many problems in marriages and homes today. There is so much failure and unhappiness. As one sees the domestic scene being subjected to divorce, delinquency, strife and tensions one is provoked to ask, "Does it have to be this way? Is this what marriage and the home really is?" The answer is emphatically **NO**, and it was never intended to be that way. There is the alternative if people would pay attention to the Lord.

It Begins

A Christian home begins when two people, a Christian man and a Christian woman, who love the Lord and each other, enter into the sacred covenant relationship before God and society as husband and wife. This home continues as they live life in the imitation of Christ. We are mindful of homes that consist of other relationships, such as a home of brothers and/or sisters living in the same domicile, extended families of grandparents, aunts, uncles and others where the will of Christ prevails. These are also Christian homes. Our prime focus is on homes that involve marriage.

Malachi 2:14 speaks of the wife of thy covenant. There is a covenant made not only between a man and a woman, but it also involves God. While some contend marriage only involves two, how does one remove the Originator and Governor of marriage from the covenant and expect the marriage to be what it ought to be? The fallacy in the thinking of too many is that they have left out God. Marriage is more than a civil, legal and social contract. It is a divine covenant that binds a divinely determined relationship with divinely appointed purposes.

Universal Laws

The law of God concerning marriage applies to everyone whether they are Christians or not. If this is not true then all marriages where Christians are not involved would be meaningless, children would not be born within a legitimate relationship, and such sins as adultery and fornication would not really be sins since no law would be violated. But the law of God governs marriage and has done so long before the religion of Christ was brought into the world. It began in Eden.

Marriage must be entered with the determination that it is a permanent and lifelong relationship (Romans 7:2,3; First Corinthians 7:39). Regardless of health, problems, poverty, abundance, age or whatever, the vow to stay faithful one to the other "till death do us part" is just exactly what God expects. Once a woman said she wanted to divorce her husband because she did not love him anymore. She was rightly asked, "What does that have to do with the vow and commitment God expects you to keep?" This is the kind of determination one must have upon entrance into marriage. It is for

better or worse, richer or poorer, sickness or health, until death.

Divine Origin

God is the giver of marriage as our texts reveal. The first home consisted of Adam and Eve, not John and Joe, or Mary and Sue. God performed, as it were, the first “marriage ceremony” because He brought the two together, which a ceremony does. What God has joined together should not be put asunder (Matthew 19:6). Understanding this teaching is not difficult. Abiding by it gives some people trouble. It is because they are not respectful of the will of the Lord.

A Christian home is where each puts his or her mate before all else, everyone except the Lord. When one does put the Lord first in life he or she will put his or her mate before everyone else, including in-laws, friends, neighbors, children, whoever. The teaching of God is to “*leave... and cleave*” (Matthew 19:5). The two become united and compose a team of godly togetherness. They are as the title of a song suggests, *Me and You Against the World*. It is a case of forsaking all others and keeping oneself to the mate as long as both shall live. Loyalty to one’s mate is paramount in the marriage and home as God would have it be.

The Christian marriage and home is where there exists a relationship of trust, loyalty, faithfulness, and confidence. Such relationship produces immeasurable blessings. Proverbs thirty-one speaks how “*the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her*” and “*she will do him good.*” To have a good wife is a favor from God (Proverbs 18:22). “*A prudent wife is from the Lord*” (Proverbs 19:14). There should be kindness, forbearance, cooperation, consideration and longsuffering. It is no longer “me, my, and mine,” but “we, us, and ours” in all things.

Count the Cost

The Christian home is composed of two who have counted the cost, who are willing to pay the price, and who will reap the benefits from God. It is where love not only exists but also is expressed. It is where you know you belong and are accepted and loved. The Christian home is where human ties of love and compassion are at their best. This does not mean perfection, but each one seeks the other’s highest good. That is what love does.

The relationship of husband and wife is sacred and is used by the Holy Spirit to depict the tie that exists between Christ and His church. He is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and she is to reverence her husband as the church does Christ (Ephesians 5).

What a blessed influence a Christian home has on children born into such a home! It was said of Abraham, Genesis 18:19, “*For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*” Ephesians 6:1-4 and Proverbs 22:6 both place heavy responsibilities on parents to rear their children the way God wants them to be reared. To know why children are the way they are, whether good or evil, consider the home from which they come. The home is a laboratory where children are molded and formed into adults, either to God’s glory or to reproach. The home is where Christianity is seen by the young eyes as they

live day by day. In the Christian home they see selflessness, honesty, sacrifice for the right, morality, honor, the dignity of labor, purity of speech, respect for others, entertainment and recreation compatible with living for God. They learn to spend and be spent for the cause of righteousness. They are taught to respect God and His will and respect authorities and rules. They learn to discern between good and evil and have love for the church.

Precious Memories

Christian homes provide godly memories that serve throughout life. The inhabitants are provided strength and a rich and righteous heritage, something to live by and for, a recognition of mission and purpose in life, goals and aspirations that lead toward heaven. In such a home the child is taught duty, responsibility, and cultivates self-respect as well as respect for others and given the pattern to follow in life. Blessed in that person who has had the privilege of being reared in a Christian home!

The Christian home is concerned for the spiritual salvation of every member of it. We should often consider Noah. He lived in such wicked times, even to the extent that God determined to destroy the world by the flood. But Noah was a righteous man and he was at least able to save his own family. Will we do as much? He found grace in the sight of God (Genesis 6:8). We can do that also if we will walk with God like he did. In the Christian home each person is taught to love God, obey the gospel, serve faithfully in His kingdom. He learns to worship, being a righteous steward of all that comes within his power. He gleans knowledge from the Word that is the light and guide of the home. The primary goal in any marriage and any home that is pleasing to God is to help each other get to heaven.

A Christian home contributes to a good mental, emotional and physical welfare also. Such homes are free from the undue strife, tension, hate, competition and pressures that can and do destroy good health in these areas. A Christian home is composed of people who follow the way of the Lord and learn how to cope with whatever life brings. There is always the source of hope, comfort, assurance of ultimate victory and providence of God. Happy homes produce happy people. The home ought to be a haven in the midst of the storm of life; an isle of refuge. In the home one should expect help, encouragement, advice and consolation from those who love most. A Christian home is a relationship that is the nearest to heaven this world affords.

Basic Unit

The home is the basic unit of society. From homes come all teachers, government leaders, businessmen, preachers, merchants, everyone. From the home comes the standards of morality of the nation. The stream will not rise higher than its spring, nor shall the land be purer than its source. Society reflects the condition of the home. There are so many social problems on the national level in America. The answer to our problems is Christ and homes produced by the way of Christ.

There are many people in the world who have the distorted idea that unless they can “do some great thing,” meaning something that brings attention and public acclaim, they are not doing much of significance. That is a false view. There is no more productive and far reaching contribution to the good of mankind both in this life and the next than to

establish and maintain a Christian home where the Lord reigns supreme and all members of the home lovingly seek His will and the spiritual salvation of each other.

Each of us can have this quality home. It begins with becoming a Christian and continues by being a faithful Christian. It is up to each one to do his or her part, father, mother, child, or whatever other relationship one has toward other members of the family, and to see that they are what they ought to be, and together live in, benefit from, and perpetuate in the home the will of Christ. May we never be satisfied with anything less.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How is a Christian home established?
2. To whom do the laws of Christ regarding marriage apply?
3. What is the origin of the home?
4. How does the origin of the home affect your evaluation of its importance?
5. Discuss the blessings of a Christian home to children as well as parents.
6. With whom does the responsibility for having a Christian home begin?
7. May a home be a Christian home without perfection?

The Foundation of Society

It has been said that the nearest thing to heaven on earth is to be a member of a Christian home. Those who have been blessed with such a home will agree. Christ has given principles for the home which, when followed, will make the home what it ought to be. We offer this lesson with a prayer that after studying this lesson you may turn again to your home and put forth the effort necessary to make sure it is a Christian home.

The home is older than the Lord's church. Like the church it originated in the mind of God and is a divine institution. No home will ever be what it ought to be if there is disregard of the Founder of It.

The home, again like the church, is composed of human beings. The first home consisted of Adam and Eve, created by God, given a residence in the Garden of Eden and from that day to this the home has been the basic and foundational unit of society. As goes the home, so goes almost everything else. The collapse of the home means the collapse of society.

God gave mankind the home for the benefit of mankind from infancy to the grave. Let us suggest three reasons why God planned the home arrangement as He did.

Honorable Birth

First, it provides an honorable birth for children. "*Be fruitful and multiply, replenish the earth*" was the command given to the first man and woman. Children born out of wedlock do not enter this world in a manner pleasing to God. This is no fault of the child but is because of the sins of its parents. It is God's will that through the home and through holy marriage that children are born. Without this there is the spread of degeneracy and immorality that eventually destroys all who are involved reflecting the low level of morality of society.

Protection

Second, the home gives protection, help and physical provision to its members. Parents provide for the children. The physical necessities for each one comes through the cooperation and work of the members of the home. We are expected to provide for our own. In sickness, health, good times, hard times, all times, we have a duty to each other to provide the things necessary in the physical realm for the sustenance of life.

Training

Third, the home is the primary training ground of the soul. Too many have wanted to shift this responsibility to the church, even to the schools. But it belongs to the home. A child comes into the world as a piece of clay that is moldable and dependent. Children can be taught and trained to know the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. That duty belongs to fathers and mothers.

Some parents are more concerned about their child's development in sports, mental

growth, physical and social advancement than they are the welfare of their soul and their relationship with God before whom they shall someday stand in judgment. At the root of the problems of many young people is the neglect of parents to assure their children of spiritual training and information from the Word of God (Ephesians 6:1-4; Proverbs 22:6).

We need more fathers like the young father who stood before the glass partition in the hospital gazing with admiration at his newborn child, and prayed, "God, help me to realize that this is more than just another mouth to feed, but a living soul to train for Thee."

Provision

The home is also the basic unit to provide for the elderly. There comes a time when the young must provide for the old just as the old once provided for the young.

The Christian home is built upon God's plan for marriage (Matthew 19:1-12). No longer is life a matter of "I, me, mine" and "you, yours." In marriage there is to be that oneness that recognizes from "this day forward" the relationship is "we, us and ours." There is to be this oneness in the home. This oneness must extend to include both mates united in Christ.

Death ends marriage in the sight of God (Romans 7:2,3). But God does not require one to continue with a mate who is sexually unfaithful to them (Matthew 19:9). This and only this cause permits a marriage partner to divorce the mate. God's foundation for the home is that the husband and wife enter marriage with respect for the life long existence of marriage. No court, no judge, no circumstance other than fornication has the power to dissolve marriage. Remarriages that are entered without the earlier marriage having been dissolved by death or divorce because of fornication are adulterous in nature and can never be acceptable before God as an honorable home. Only the innocent party has the right to remarry.

Companionship

The home is a place of companionship. "*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.*" This was God's concern for mankind. God made for the male a suitable companion in the female. Many things can destroy this companionship, such as drunkenness, selfishness and failure to accept the duties of marriage. Sexual infidelity can be the breaking of the tie.

Married people should enjoy companionship. They do not have each other forever. Ask those who have been called upon to bury their mate about companionship. Husbands and wives should live life together. Each should live in such a way that the other can admire them, desire them and seek their company. When this is done, and the inevitable time comes for parting through death, it can be said, "We had a wonderful Christian companionship together."

The Christian home is where the husband is the leader of the home. The spiritual leadership is also on his shoulders. Sad it is that so many men have also neglected this most serious duty. Often it is the wife and mother who must give direction in service to God. This is not as it ought to be. A man ought to be ashamed to be so weak as to fail in what is his number one responsibility toward his family. It is far more important than

physical provisions and this does not minimize that duty. Each husband and father ought to commit himself to lead his wife and children to God through God's church. Regardless of whatever else he may achieve in life, when he does this he is a success before the Almighty. He is a failure if he does not do this with all his power and ability.

Often one parent or the other will keep the home divided religiously. This is so disturbing to children as well as each other. It brings a strain on the ties of love, respect and oneness. It destroys opportunities in training children aright. It creates confusion and frustration and often is the means of the destruction of faith in the hearts of members of the family.

Two fathers were talking and one said, "I give my son the very best education." The other commended him for this, but added, "Do not rob him of the greatest gift you can give." "And what is that," asked the first father. The second responded, "Do not fail to give him the memory of having a Christian father, a Christian example, a Christian upbringing. No other man can give him that."

Memory

When children are deprived of having a memory of a devoted Christian father and mother they have been cheated from the greatest security, comfort, pattern, faith and confidence that they ever receive. Happy is that home where the family is led by a Christian man and woman.

In the Christian home the mother is queen. Behind every good man there is usually the encouragement, support and advice of a good woman. The influence upon children, either for good or bad, that is in the power of the mother cannot be measured because of its enormity. "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world."

So often men who have accomplished great things have had the benefit of a mother who sacrificed themselves in the training of their children. This was their duty, and they considered it their privilege. Nor were they inattentive and negligent in performing their godly task. It is a shame when women who have borne children will not put their primary duty first and attend to the home, but seek other careers of a social, political and financial emphasis and their children denied the guidance and comfort that God intended to be provided by the mother.

The "worthy woman" of Proverbs 31 was such that her husband praised her and her children called her blessed. This could not be said if she had failed in her God-given role of wife and mother.

Let us present a few straightforward words to the young. Especially those who have reached their teen years should give heed because they are accountable before God. They ought to be Christians. The home is not what it ought to be when there are young people of accountable age who have yet refused to obey the gospel.

Be A Christian

Being a Christian means to live a life of purity in Christ. In Galatians 5 we read a catalog of sins that includes the sin of "*lasciviousness*." Not only are the young to abstain from fornication and adultery, but also reveling, riotous conduct, lasciviousness and such like. Some have the idea that because one is young he has the license to "go wild." This is not so. It is mistake to encourage and allow the young to cultivate habits and appetites for

that which is worldly and sinful. Rather, they should be taught self-control.

As for the sexual desire, it is clean, pure, wholesome and honorable. But God requires self-control and respect for this appetite. The satisfaction of the sexual desire outside of marriage is sinful. One of the purposes of marriage is to provide for this need (First Corinthians 7:2). But outside of holy wedlock that which is given by God for man's pleasure, companionship and reproduction of the race becomes an abomination. Lasciviousness and promiscuous conduct arouses the passions that cannot be satisfied outside of marriage. From such behavior the young must abstain. The deliberate creation of unlawful desire is to flirt with hell and sin against God.

Christian boys and girls ought assist each other in controlling these appetites rather than encouraging each other with temptation. It should be the goal of every boy and girl to present bodies to their marriage partners unsoiled by sin, but pure, and void of the cheap conduct that is so rampant today.

Giving one's body to another outside of marriage is not a sign of love but a sign of degeneracy. Nor would one who truly loves another ever encourage the other to commit sin and damn the soul. We would urge the young to find the greatest happiness in life by following the way of Jesus Christ and "*keep thyself pure.*"

Love

Home is where there is love. The source of love is God (First John 4:8). The fullest measure of love cannot exist apart from Christ. Love ties the family together. When there is love for God and His Word, love for His Son and His church, there will be love for each other. This love will make the home as near heaven as one can find on earth.

We close with this story. Imagine a young man who marries his chosen young lady. After their honeymoon they return to their small and modest quarters and begin life together. After a while a child is given them; possibly more. The mother reads the child the Bible stories. The father leads them in spiritual upbringing. They are loyal to God in work and worship. Their hearts are thrilled as one by one their precious children are baptized into Christ. These children mature physically and spiritually, and before it seems that much time has elapsed, the children are planning marriages. Being taught to seek a mate from among the people of God, they have the determination in their heart to rear their children as they have been reared, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is then that one can realize even here on this earth and in this life the fondest and most precious blessings of having made the home a Christian home.

From this moment forward, let us all resolve that we shall do our best to assure each member of the family the benefit and treasure of living and growing in a truly Christian home.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why can the home properly be called the foundation of society?
2. What blessings should the home provide for the members of the home?
3. Discuss temporal and eternal rewards of a good home.

The Home Church and Her Young

NUMBER ONE

We have heard the many warnings from faithful brethren who are in positions to know that the church is losing thousands of her young people every year. We have no reason to doubt the accuracy of their statements. We rather believe, however, that the home is losing the young and the church is suffering the loss. Be that as it may, we are inclined to believe that the loss of our young is possibly the greatest loss the church has suffered in the twentieth century. Estimates range from fifty to ninety per cent no longer are staying with church, depending upon the area studied. Many of those who nominally remain with the church have drifted into the worldly and liberal digression and erroneous tangents so characteristic of many churches of Christ today. This loss has become so apparent during the very years when the young would ordinarily be of college age whether they be in college or not.

Some years ago I set out to discover what was happening to the faith of the young during college years and why the loss. More precisely, I wanted to learn what the home church could do to prevent it and recover as many as possible. I visited many campuses, both state schools and so-called "Christian" campuses, as well as other private institutions, interviewing students, preachers, teachers, counselors, student center directors, dorm supervisors, youth workers, deans, presidents and whoever would give me the time to discuss this matter. The answer I received from my questions were for the most part thoughtfully given because I asked them to allow me their time before I visited them, requesting they give thought to the area of investigation I was making prior to our discussion. It was usually obvious that some preparation was given to the answers to my questions.

The information I received was tremendous and the volume of it so large that all I can present in this account only touches the surface, but sufficiently, I believe, for us to see the nature and magnitude of the problem of losing our young. A lengthy series once appeared in the GOSPEL ADVOCATE, 1971, reviewing my investigation and campus visits.

Areas of Inquiry

My inquiries were along four major lines of thought: (1) What are the deficiencies in attitude and knowledge among incoming freshmen and how do these change during college years? (2) What can the home church do once they are away from home to help them remain faithful? (3) What are the dangers, problems, frustrations and most destructive influences they encounter in college environments? (4) What are the most effective means and activities for young people? What is really worthwhile, that will stabilize them in the faith? The answers varied somewhat from college to college depending on the nature of the school. But there were so many things in common with

them all.

Several observations are in order. I was impressed with the value of the “Christian” schools pertaining to moral environment. I was disturbed with the glaring decline even in these areas, and particularly with the compromising, false and liberal doctrines being taught and protected on these "Christian" campuses in recent years. It is not unfair to say that for the most part those who sacrificed so much to bring these schools into existence have been betrayed because the very purposes for which the school was established are being buried beneath a barrage of liberal propaganda.

By noting the relatively better moral climate on “Christian” campuses, we do not demean the work done among some state college students, but the state campus is far more open, compromising, permissive and outright rebellious toward the will of God. But even the work done among students in state schools was obviously being influenced by the liberal and worldly ways all the way from near cults to the “do your own thing” philosophy.

The acceptance of drugs, immorality, alcoholic beverages, co-ed dorms, immodest dress and profane speech was much in evidence on state campuses more than elsewhere. Such an environment presents special needs for the Christian who attends them.

I was impressed with the urgency of effective work among young people. While not in total despair, I find little reason for realistic optimism, and faithful workers among the young are in near panic as the problems sweep the youth in large numbers. Many of these workers have simply resigned, even promoted the idea, to go along with the trends. Our losses are high and departures are numerous because of digressive influences within and without. Folks back home are too often not even aware of the seriousness and magnitude of the problem, resting comfortably in their naive state that things are now as they were when they went to school.

I am convinced that the young people generally do not lose their faith at college as much as having taken little faith to college with them. We are losing them before they reach college, and it only becomes glaringly evident once they are away from family influence, the home church, parental advice, and then fall under the spell of their new freedoms. Many are overwhelmed by the parade of the self-proclaimed superiority they must endure from their professors.

It was startling to me to hear one tell me that probably less than fifteen per cent attend services regularly once they arrive on his campus. Campus workers often never have a chance to be of assistance because the youths never allow them to even know of their once-professed connection with the church. We are obviously not doing a good job prior to their leaving for college. Liberal churches that abound around campuses take advantage of this attitude and are often successful in leading the young into religion which is not New Testament Christianity.

I am further convinced that homes and home churches are not meeting the issues, many not even being aware of them, and fewer still having knowledge how to cope with them. We must get busy doing something about that. Unless great strides are taken among the young to return to the “old paths” the Bible teaches, having Biblical authority for what we say and do, these young will be forever lost to the cause of Christ. They may be religious, but not as the Bible teaches them to be.

Psalm 71:18, *“O God, forsake me not until I have declared thy strength unto the next generation, thy might to every one that is to come.”*

Lack of Knowledge

The first area of questioning had to do with the deficiencies of knowledge and attitude among those entering the college years? (These things are specifically concerned with those going to college, but they are also reasonably applicable to all of that age, whether entering college or not.) They have a lack of personal conviction. They have a borrowed faith, not the real sincere acceptance of truth because they have learned it for themselves, but because they have leaned on others. This is partly their own fault, but why have they not been taught better? They have attended Bible classes and worship services often due to family pressure and insistence, but have never really learned and been convinced by the evidence of truth. This is either because it has not been properly presented to them, or they have been unwilling to apply it to themselves, which in many instances is the case. Generally speaking, they are Biblically ignorant. Once away from home, lacking conviction, they forsake the church.

Young people need to be asked, "What do you believe, and why?" As one has said, "God has no grandchildren." The sad fact is, parents and local brethren cannot bestow their faith on their young without the young coming to willingly believe it and knowing why. One cannot be sustained on the faith of another. We may have told the young WHAT to believe, but evidently they do not know WHY they should believe it. They remain uninformed until other influences take them away. While they are often touted as the most brilliant generation to ever come upon the scene of human history, we have strong reasons to doubt that when we observe their conduct. They are surely more ignorant of the Bible than most any generation in this century.

Interestingly, the faith among young people who come from the small, rural churches seems far stronger than those who come from the large, rich, worldly metropolitan churches. Those from mission areas have far greater faith than those where the church counts progress in numbers. This is probably because they have come from churches where conviction was taught to be necessary, not mere social acceptance. Faith among the young where there are many churches, large numbers, big money, seems to be less grounded because they are what they are because many others are what they are, but not because they are founded on "thus saith the Lord." This is no argument for small churches against large churches per se, but it is a strong indictment that churches that recognize the need for "thus saith the Lord" produce far stronger faith than the social minded, recreational, entertaining, numerically prominent and financially comfortable churches who have most likely compromised truth to gain their recognition.

Some of Their Confusions

We found some alarming attitudes among them. They want less "doctrine," and more social action. This they are getting from liberal churches. They have almost entirely missed the mission of Christ and the church.

They speak much of "love" but show little comprehension of what love is as taught in Scripture. They consider it mostly an emotion and sentiment to be outwardly expressed by holding hands, closing eyes, swaying bodies, and such as that. They do not seem to recognize that love is seeking the other's highest good as God has determined that good. They act, with some exceptions, as if doctrine and love are in conflict. They

fail to note the Biblical teaching that one cannot separate love from obedience to Christ's doctrine. They seem to think love allows "let me go my own way without rebuke, whatever I say, do, or want." This they receive in heavy doses from liberal churches and liberal teachers in pulpits and college classrooms. They consider doctrine as "our" doctrine while others have "their" doctrine, not realizing that the Lord's church is to produce no doctrine, but is to uphold the doctrine of Christ in our world.

They are being taught aggressively that our services are cold and irrelevant, and they are indifferent to services unless they have some kind of "charge" to them to make them feel good. They obviously do not understand the purpose and nature of worship. They are not aware of what the Bible teaches about worship, or the proper attitude toward worship, and seldom can tell you with Biblical authority what ought to be done in worship. They have drifted, with help, with the trend of emotionalism, "getting turned on with Jesus," and "feeling good," expecting something special to come upon them from the Holy Spirit, even if it has to be invented.

Characteristic of the young, they feel they simply must be accepted regardless of what they say, do, how they act, dress, or what influence they exert on others. If you do not accept them, whatever they display, you are bigoted, old-fashioned, uncaring, lacking in compassion, and cannot be trusted. They are not beyond parroting the church bashing they hear in the schools and liberal churches. They are big on condemning those who condemn anything, denying anybody the right to "judge" anything, except for themselves. They detest any form of condemnation except what they choose to condemn.

Those who are knowledgeable of the Bible know that these views are in error and can be and have been proven fallacious. Not all have bowed the knee to Baal, but we speak generally. Most are inconsistent, and are not even aware of it. But the sad thing is that many of these have been "raised in the church," as is evidenced by their words and phrases. But respect for the Bible is so often near non-existent.

There are other attitudes of note that are more commendable. They care far less about rugs, drapes, buildings and parking lots. They seem to be more concerned for people than steeples, even though their concern is often misdirected. Many expressed grave disgust at large expenditures for buildings in which to meet, but have more sympathy for large expenditures in which to play. I never quite got one to explain that to me. It should be evident that these large expenditures, whichever direction, have not stopped the youth drain.

The young are really repulsed by what they consider gross hypocrisy among members of the church. This probably has had a far greater impact among the young than among older members. This may be because the hypocrisy they observe is among older members, even though they fail to see the inconsistency and hypocrisy in their own peer group. Coming from youthful idealism into the world of realism shakes them. They find it hard to adjust to the reality that everybody and everything is not as professed to be. Much that they call hypocrisy, however, is actually immaturity, and the need for growth among those they criticize. They find it hard to discern the difference. Some of this will be tempered with their own maturing.

There is no excuse for hypocrisy among the young or the old. But who can deny that adults have placed many stumbling blocks in the path of youth? I heard it repeatedly said, "I'm so sick of the hypocrisy in the church." I could assure them that many others agree with them on that score. I could not get good answers from the young as to why that ought cause them to take out their anger at hypocrites against the Lord by turning

away from His church.

They call the work of the church relatively unimportant and push it aside to accommodate their whims, pleasures, sports, dates and “good times.” Their religion, if it remains at all, is often a matter of convenience rather than personal conviction. All of this takes a deadly toll among them. We cannot overstate the power of example, good and bad.

What must be done is for everybody to be taught that two wrongs will not produce the right. Nobody can go to heaven on the basis of the hypocrisy of others. Who can believe we can throw out God and His Word simply because some ignore it, or even profess to follow it but do not really obey it? Hypocrisy is not confined to just those who are older, however. Gross hypocrisy in the actions and attitudes are much in evidence among those who readily criticize the older members of the church. How much more hypocritical could one be that to renounce the Lord’s church because somebody is not living acceptably who claims to be a member?

Bible Study Classes

Many young people are, in their words, “bored to tears” with their Bible classes in the home church. Often this is because they have no interest and concern, but often it is because the classes provided them are not conducted intelligently, by competent people, with informed teachers, but just whoever happens to be willing to volunteer to take them. Often I had the complaint that they did not believe the elders of their home church knew what was going on in classes, and did not really put much stress on providing them the best possible teachers, and even less concern about materials. While they studied theories, math formulae, complicated data in school, they are subjected to fill-in-the-blank booklets, puzzles, catchy fictitious stories of “problem solving,” dull lectures, and ill-prepared presentations. They are taught so little Bible in “Bible class” that they know little about the Bible.

I was impressed that brethren and sisters who teach must learn that the day of Saturday night preparation is over if we are going to retain our young. It never was adequate, and it is now so painfully apparent. Many rightly feel the teachers are not dedicated, are there because nobody else wants to be, therefore, and are not motivated to serious thought and Biblical inquiry. Possibly, brethren, we have gone along for so long with publishing houses’ graduated level materials that we fail to realize how the young need to comprehend the same gospel as their parents and grandparents. Why is not a thoroughly prepared open Bible study far better than what so many are getting?

I would contend that the day of studying only what somebody else says the Bible says, through printed literature, is ineffective. Many young people told me that they wish from the fifth and sixth grade they had been given opportunity to simply study the Bible.

Another weakness in our teaching is that too often we merely relate facts without application to life of those facts. While the Bible is relevant to our age many are never shown this relevancy, and then it becomes dull. Unless our teaching efforts are improved, become more Biblically oriented, sharpened and brought up to their capacity of learning, we will not retard the departure of our young from the way of God, nor will we develop them in the personal conviction they must have to sustain them.

Worldliness

It pains me to relate how impressed I was that so many young people have abandoned a strong Biblical stand regarding worldliness. They say preaching they have heard on the subject has been vague, weak, compromising and abstract. Therefore, they shun to condemn drinking alcoholic beverages, modern dancing, smoking, even though most question the propriety of drugs. They are frustrated by churches that provide havens for violators of God's will by condoning worldliness. Let one church take a righteous stand and some get disgruntled over it, some run away to a more permissive church, and they are received with open arms without repentance. This disgusts them. It disgusts me, also.

Many have never seen the dignity of negative preaching, and clamor for only something positive. They have not been taught the whole counsel of God. They have been brainwashed into thinking condemning error is some way a display of an ugly heart. Furthermore, often they hear the denunciation of sin from the pulpit, but see the practice of it without consequence. Elderships have much for which to give answer along this line.

They will hear much criticism of condemnation of sins from both parents and peers. Sin may only be condemned generally, but not specifically. It is like one said concerning the statement in prayer, "Lord, forgive us our sins." He wondered what would happen if somebody said, "Name one you would admit."

The young, taking their cue from the older ones, see the fear of offending the prominent, the more wealthy, and the quest to be socially acceptable in the community. They see cowardice and fear to defend what is proclaimed, and while they do not admire that, they come to think this is the way to face error. Their stand against worldliness is so weak because they have been shown this weakness regarding it from both home and home church.

Where are the young lacking? You name it, and with many, it is lacking. I repeat, they are so Biblically ignorant. What they do know they are not well able to communicate. They know of Abraham and Moses but do not even know who lived first, or how each fits into God's scheme of things. There is a tremendous need to emphasize the authority of the Bible, and the necessity of having Bible authority for what is taught and done. They cannot even defend the inspiration of the Bible, and this is deadly seeing how in nearly all schools there are those teaching things that would undermine that truth.

How badly they need courses that survey the themes of each book of the Bible, and how the books relate to each other, and to us. The need to know why the church is not a denomination. One administrator of a "Christian" school whose enrollment then consisted mostly from "Christian" homes said that eighty per cent of the incoming freshmen considered the church just another denomination among denominations. On a questionnaire that asked, "Is the church of Christ a denomination?" eight of ten answered, "Yes."

The home church must turn attention to teaching the home to fulfill its duty toward the young. Rather than trying to take the place of the home with fun and games, the church needs to teach the home what members of the home should be and do. More than the local church, even more than professors, student centers, or anything else, the home must be strong in the Lord because there, more than anywhere else, is where the young are molded. The home church can help the young by helping the home help the young. It is all too evident the church in many places is losing its young because of the

home rather than the church, except as the church neglects its duty in teaching, and as the home church may itself become liberal and digressive, bashing the Lord's church in favor of newness and change without regard to revealed Biblical truth.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are generally the attitudes of young people today as discovered through the interviews and questions asked?
2. Discuss: They do not lose their faith in college because they took very little faith with them to college?
3. What are the dangers facing our youth in "Christian" schools today?
4. How much influence does peer pressure have on young people away from home?
5. Are young people correct in thinking there is hypocrisy in the church?
6. Do programs of "fun and games" save our young people?
7. Why are so many young people bored with their classes?
8. What do you think of their greater concern for people than drapes, parking lots, etc.?
9. Why do so many teachers rely so heavily on literature from bookstores?
10. How do young people from rural, smaller churches compare with young people from larger congregations in cities? Is this always the case?

The Home Church and Her Young

NUMBER TWO

I asked those with whom I discussed these matters, "What would you wish you could tell the leaders of local churches?" The attitude toward the leadership was often one of guarded respect, but almost as often, and I found this disturbing, open rebellion and disrespect. Some even said, "Get with it or get out." They wondered why, if the church is supposed to be so important, that the leadership moved like it really was not too significant. They complained of those leaders who do not do the work and really hinder those who want to work. While some detested what they called "hard preaching," there were others who had heard what some call "hard preaching" and wondered why the leadership was so shy, sometimes cowardly, to support preaching that was "right down the Biblical line." They expressed a concern that the leadership of local churches, generally speaking, did not take their task very seriously, or at least did not show that they did. The correctness of these views may be debated, but this is what existed among them.

As for preachers, they commented on how so many seemed to be so impressed with themselves, and so concerned about their "image," so interested in their job that they will bow and bend to whatever pressures come upon them to retain their job, image, and especially when they have good incomes. They said they were tired of joke telling, but the inconsistency of all this is how they will flock like birds when one of these charismatic joke tellers are speaking. It was hard to determine what some of them really were thinking. They expressed disgust toward those who they think rely on verbosity and personality to make up for their lack of study and preparation. But again, they will flock to hear and follow such preachers. These kind of comments were both encouraging, but at times very disturbing because it reflected the kind of preaching they had been hearing.

Profitable Activities

A second major area of inquiry that I made was what those I consulted believed to be profitable activities. I will be highly selective in this section and abbreviated because it would take too long to mention specific programs that were sometimes suggested. But even the young seemed to be aware that much of what many churches are doing is simply busy-work. They want what they believe to be meaningful, although most of the students found it difficult to define what they considered to be meaningful. Great numbers of them did not consider the things the Bible calls for the church to do to be very meaningful. It was evident with some that to be meaningful meant what was exciting, fun, sensational, entertaining and pleasing to their peers both in and out of the church. I found among several state campus works that they try to imitate the denominational student centers, even the fraternities and sororities on campus.

They want to get into parades, put up cleverly worded signs in front of our buildings during school "homecoming," have rallies before ball games, etc. They

obviously have never separated the work of the church from such mundane, trivial and secular matters. They really did not impress me as understanding what it the function of the Lord's church. Some want the college age people to operate under their own supervision away from the eldership, having their presidents and vice-presidents, having no real connection with the church except for the church to provide facilities, and pay the bills. What was astounding is how many adult workers among these young people go along with that approach.

When you asked them about attendance at Bible classes, worship services, special learning opportunities, they said they usually did that back home. But they are far more lax about this once they are at school. They are restless, but not for coming to a knowledge of the truth.

The Church Nearby and at Home

While there were those who expressed the above attitudes, there were others, although fewer in number, who longed for a church near campus that would provide for them opportunities to work among their fellow students, teach the distinctiveness of the church when they brought their friends to assemblies and not just try to make everybody feel good as if they were simply "honored guests," and act as if the church was so fearful of offending that their friends could come and go and feel all was well even though they remained lost. They sometimes said they were actually ashamed of the services because leadership would allow the most incompetent song leaders to lead singing and it sounded terrible. They asked, "Why can't we put our best foot forward for others to see what the church stands for?"

What can the home church do for their young people once they are in the college environment? To be sure, many opportunities have already been missed by that time. Once they are away there is less contact and less influence by the home church. But one request repeatedly heard by those who work with the students is that home churches let churches near the schools know their young people are in the area. Students often do not come to the services at all once they come to school, and brethren around these schools never have contact with them because they do not know they exist. They never can find out who they are. Religious preferences are no longer recorded at registration. Word of mouth or chance is the only way to find out who might have some contact with the church unless and until students attend the services, or the home church notifies the church near campus.

We regret that some campus works are not the kind and quality they ought to be, lacking Biblical soundness, and faithful brethren would not even want their young to be connected with the campus work. A major problem the young faithful brethren have today is finding a church reasonably near a campus that still stands forthrightly for the truth of the Bible. So many have drifted with the liberal trends and tides of the world that brethren at home had just as soon their young not be contaminated with what is being served by campus churches.

I made inquiry into what those around all these schools considered to be the greatest frustrations, problems and most destructive influences the young encounter. Youth is a great age, but it is not easy. Social pressure was mentioned by everyone of them. Faith shaking doctrines promoted by unbelieving professors placed them at a distinct disadvantage because they are often not allowed to respond, do not have equal

opportunity to state their convictions, and so often are not even prepared to defend what they say they believe. When most of the class laughs at religion and pokes fun at the church it is difficult for the timid and shy young Christian to stand. Teachers play a deadly role. When teachers, fellow students are both against you, and you have a compromised message coming from the campus church, everything is made more difficult for our young.

Even in “Christian” schools this sophistication of “expertise” that some professors exhibit is intimidating to many. Statements are made as if what they say is the last word when the young Christian knows that what he teaches is contrary to what the student has been taught. It is a shame and a disgraceful indictment of the “Christian” schools, in nearly every case, that they do not reinforce Biblical truth the young have learned at home and in their local church, but the teachers seem to think it is their mission in life to change the views of their students to harmonize with the seminary and theological training the teachers have absorbed while obtaining their arbitrarily determined academic degrees. It became obvious how wise it is that parents tell their young as they leave for school, even for “Christian” schools, not to swallow everything they are told. Likely as not, you will encounter false teachers at either place as quickly as teachers that teaches the truth.

Peer Pressure

Pressure from their peers is so tremendous it cannot be measured for its magnitude. This is why many youths get caught up in using drugs, engaging in immoralities and drinking alcohol. It is because “everybody else is doing it.” Of course, everybody is not doing it, but it seems that way so often.

Intentionally, ideas are often planted in their mind to discount the Bible, question its authority and validity and relevancy to our modern and scientific age. The fact that those who ridicule and discount the Bible know little to nothing about the Bible does not prevent them from creating problems for those who have been taught to love, respect and study the Bible. Home churches sorely need lessons that build confidence in what the Bible claims itself to be, the Word of God.

The young are taught that the Bible is not the standard, that there really is no standard, that “if it feels good, do it,” then bombarded with the temptations to do evil, the pressures to “go along” by their peers. You can see the Christian youth has entered a spiritually savage jungle and needs all the help he can receive.

Some brethren, trying to provide better companionship for Christians who attend the schools, have built dormitories where Christian students can live and maintain Christian standards. Too often the coed dorms at state schools are nothing but state financed brothels. This may sound harsh, but from what I was told I have no reason to disbelieve it. How can they maintain any semblance of decency while living in such environments?

Our young must be assured that for every attack against God and His Word there is an answer. Even though they may not readily have the answer, and even though it may pose a difficult research to learn the answer, there is no objection against God and His Word for which God has not provided an answer that refutes error. Of this our young need to be assured, and therefore, need to not be humiliated nor afraid to stand for what they have been taught by faithful brethren to be the truth. Truth can be defended, and

there are those capable of defending it. So often attackers will not allow opportunities for their edicts of error to be questioned or challenged. They make their high-toned pronouncements and demand everybody accept them, even contending that anybody with a brain will readily swallow everything the college professor tells them because he is smart. Our young need to know they have no obligation to accept that sinister attack on truth.

Dress and Appearance

As would be expected there is the problem of dress and appearance. Some of the worst looking human beings I have ever seen were walking about the campuses of what were supposed to be prestigious institutions of learning. No only are so many so sloppy, reflecting a lack of self-respect, but immodesty is the rule rather than the norm in some of the places I visited. One student told me he had known many students, but never had known a boy with long hair or a girl with a mini-skirt who did not seriously lack self respect or a sense of responsibility for their appearance and influence. Another commented, "You can cut the hair and lengthen the skirt, but it takes longer to change the heart that has allowed it." Just why young Christians wish to ape the lowest and most base elements of society is inexplicable. It reflects that they did not learn much of the way of Christ at home or from the home church, and they are not getting much from the church near the campus. How the church needs to teach the young to be models of Christianity, not mockers of it!

Brethren who contend appearances are merely innocent fads and passing quirks are blind to the realities of the atheistic and social revolution in our society and the influence it has had on molding the mind, values, attitudes and hearts of the young, even in the church. We are fools to shut our eyes to the realities of evil that surround our youth.

There are other problems young people face that threaten and upset their spiritual balance. There is the pressure of time, the establishment of priorities, the shock of the large size of the schools they enter, the impersonal qualities of campus existence, becoming a number on a card, the loss of individual concern everybody needs.

This emphasizes all the more the need for establishing contact with faithful churches near campuses, if they exist. If that does not occur early they may soon begin to think it does not matter. They turn to do whatever they wish and get lost in the crowd. Even on campuses of schools operated by Christians they are shocked by things that are wrong. Because of this they are subject to becoming cynical against everything called "Christian."

No campus is perfect. There are problems on all of them. But the campuses where Christian principles are at least verbalized and where they do not condone such things as drug abuse, immorality, profanity and other evils so obvious in the world, may prove worth the cost and effort. The present problem in "Christian" schools is their adoption of liberalism and digression and it is existent in every "Christian" school, and rampant and dominant in most of them.

I found it generally true that concern for the individual student is more apparent on "Christian" campuses than on state campuses. Unless you do something that is illegal the administrators in state schools generally keep hands off. Only when someone is caught violating civil law do they get involved. All kinds of Satanic movements are found there,

and that some of these are found on “Christian” campuses is even more disturbing.

Other Pressures on Them

While the picture is generally bleak and discouraging, we must mention other pressures that make life for the college person rather difficult. He and she face such things as military service, who to marry, life’s profession, even what will be their major, as well as meeting the financial responsibilities of getting their education. All these things make an impact on their attitudes and lives. Decisions regarding money, jobs, friends, acceptance, convenience, family, the world generally takes its toll. The young must learn to include God in every choice in life, usually in an environment where God is declared irrelevant.

The impact of coming into an environment where immorality is often so prevalent and accepted is greater than folks back home realize. There is the accumulation of youthful passion, a sense of independence and freedom from parental supervision, escape from preaching against the wickedness of immorality, and the urging to “do your own thing.” I got the distinct impression from those I interviewed that on some campuses it was almost a wide open society where anything goes. Placing youths in that setting who has been taught to have respect for right and wrong can be a very tremendous shock to them.

Often their problems are created, or at least aggravated, by their home. Family conflicts, complaints about money, making the young feel guilty like he is imposing on parents because he is costing so much, only adds to his frustration. Cars, money and late hours have proven deadly to many students. Young people are like springs coiled to expand. Hold them down until the moment you must let go and they spring out of control. Let them expand gradually, and under control, and when the time comes to remove your hand, they stand on their own.

Why Must You be Different?

I never did discover why another two problems exist and are so demanding, but almost all of the young mentioned them both. There is pressure to (1) conform to the crowd around them, and (2) to be sure you become different from people back home. This is neither wise nor reasonable to think either pressure brings good necessarily. Whether one should conform to others must be determined by the truth. Whether to be different from folks back home should be determined the same way. But they are brainwashed into thinking they are not really educated unless they throw away whatever those who love them most have taught them in the past.

Advisors of the young told me there were five very vulnerable types of young people being knocked off track once they get away from home into the college environment. (1) Those who have been overprotected and never given opportunity to exercise the power of choice, how to choose, what to choose, seldom trusted, and given few responsibilities, everything done for them, and escaped discipline. (2) Those who were forced to do this or that, even regarding the church, without ever being benefited with explanations and reasons why. (3) Those very subject to pressure, who lack personal conviction because of lack of knowledge. (4) Those who have been prominent in high school activities and are often disillusioned because they are not so suddenly prominent

on college campus. They often pay a terrible price seeking that prominence. (5) These who have been granted too much freedom at home, being either allowed or forced to be an adult before they were capable of dealing with adult situations, physically, intellectually, financially and spiritually.

Now that we have considered some of these matters, what do we do with all of this? Only a portion of information I learned has been included, but enough for us to draw some conclusions about what we must do in the interest of the young and their relationship to the church.

Is this information merely interesting to us, or do we care enough to want to do something for the young that will really help keep them faithful to Christ? This is an important decision each congregation must make, and this means each individual should be concerned.

I pursued this investigation with the lofty expectation that we all can profit from what is discovered. I would hope that the local church would make better efforts to provide a solid, grounded spiritual foundation for the young under its influence. We desperately need people who will give themselves to the task of devising courses of study that will prepare the youth for what is before them. We must provide qualified teachers for them so they can teach and show the young what Christians are supposed to be.

We need those who will guide, plan, promote activities that are truly effective. This takes time, thought and money. It cannot be done haphazardly.

We must get an "away-from-home" department for our young. This must be overseen by dedicated and informed people. The home church must keep in touch with them and the churches near the schools also.

More than anything else, possibly, we must put an emphasis on teaching the home regarding parental responsibility for the young and teach the young "thus saith the Lord." Our teaching and preaching must be the kind God wants, as Scripture reveals, in message and content. We must expose them to the truth and warn them of the error, if we expect them to believe and obey truth. How can they take convictions to school with them if we have not shown them the right way?

We must learn to listen to what they tell us. They can inform us of their needs sometimes far better than we can know by mere observation, or trying to recall how it was when we went to school. Today's students face things the older generation never faced, at least not as openly, defiantly and rebelliously against God as things are today. Our task is before us. Our young are depending on us. We need parents and home churches that really care and will act aggressively. Can you think of any other way we can keep from losing our most cherished possession, our young people?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What do young people want to tell leaders of the church?
2. How have "Bible chairs" and student centers tried to fix the problem?
3. What can the home church do once the young person has left for the campus or some other residence?
4. How do professors take advantage of young people?
5. Are there answers to the questions and problems young people face?
6. What damage does atheistic influence have on young people in their educational efforts?

7. Why are some young people convinced you must somehow become different from what they left back home?

8. What advantage does the “Christian” school have over other places of learning?

9. What types of young people are most vulnerable to being swept away once they leave home?

10. What major steps can the home church make to improve situations for young people leaving home?

The Matter of Marriage

The institution of marriage is firmly ingrained in our society and for good reason. The Bible teaches that marriage and the home have come from God (Gen. 2:18,25). Since God is the originator and designer of marriage, is it not a demonstration of wisdom and good sense to learn what He had in mind regarding it?

So many people enter into marriage very unprepared for the kind of relationship God intended. Many times the marriage runs aground upon hard times and even falls apart in divorce. Much of this could be prevented if those who contemplate getting married would spend a few moments in serious consideration of marriage and what it involves.

There are certain purposes for marriage as revealed in Scripture. Companionship is probably the best word of our language to convey in brief form the nature of marriage. “*It is not good that man should be alone,*” God determined. He did not say being unmarried is bad, but the need of companionship was recognized and intended by God.

Procreation, the perpetuation of the human family, was also an intended result of marriage (Gen. 1.28). Children are to be born into a home of married parents.

Marriage is to avoid fornication (1 Cor. 7.2,3). The sexual drive is a powerful force, and of itself is not evil. When people satisfy their sexual drive outside of marriage it is sinful in the sight of the very One who gave man that drive in the beginning. God gave the drive and God provided for the satisfaction of it in marriage. The sad fact that many disregard God’s law does not change His law. The havoc many have reaped because of their unwillingness to obey the Lord is beyond measure.

Marriage is for Life

Marriage is intended to last for the lifetime of those involved (1 Cor 7:39; Rom. 7.1-4). To enter into marriage with any other intent than “till death do us part” is to pervert a divine institution.

God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), and there should not be the putting asunder what God has joined (Matt. 19:3-8). The will of Jesus Christ regarding marriage was what God designed from the beginning.

Yes, God will allow divorce, but only when one of the partners has been guilty of fornication (Matt. 19:9). This is the only grounds on which God will accept divorce.

Many have divorced their mates for a variety of reasons, many even trivial. Today, there is even what is called a “no fault” divorce. You do not even have to have a reason. Just divorce! But even though such are the ways of our world, it is a violation of the way of God. People who think that everything that is legal is also acceptable to God are grossly misled.

When one has the misfortune of having their husband or wife be unfaithful to them and “*defile the marriage bed,*” they are permitted by the Lord to divorce the sinful one. Of course, they should consider forgiving their wayward mate if he or she is penitent and seeks forgiveness. But God does not require one to live with a mate who has broken his or her vows and given the body to another.

The one who divorces a fornicating mate may remarry if he or she wishes (Matt.

19:9), but the one who has committed the transgression has forfeited the right of marriage (Matt. 19:9).

It is a tragedy of our time that so many people are behaving as if they were nothing more than animals, swapping marriage partners, living in adultery, taking to themselves whosoever they will without respect for the sanctity of the body, the institution of marriage, or the integrity of their vows. No one should marry unless they understand and appreciate God's intent and design for marriage regarding the source of it, purpose, duration and expectations. It is the height of folly to expect a marriage to be what it ought and can be if God and His will is left out of it.

Leave and Cleave

Those who marry are to "leave and cleave" (Gen. 2:24; Mt. 19:5). They are to leave others and cleave to one another. While this does not require a complete severance of all association with others, it does demand loyalty to one's mate before anyone and everyone else, including parents. It has been shown repeatedly that in-laws, would-be-suitors, nobody can disrupt a marriage when the husband and wife "leave and cleave." One ought not marry unless they can place their first loyalty to the mate, only second to God. The beautiful thing is, when one truly loves God, he will love what God says regarding marriage and will put the mate first.

God has given the prescription for a blessed and happy marriage. Every prospective bride and groom should study Ephesians 5:22-33. The Holy Spirit, through the inspired pen of Paul, shows the marital relationship likened unto the relationship between Christ and His church.

While destructive and heretical views are being promoted in our society that would confuse and pervert the distinct roles of husband and wife, there has never been conceived a better plan for the welfare of marriage mates than that which is revealed in Scripture, nor shall there be. Who would know more about human happiness than He who created? Who would know more what it takes to have a happy marriage than He who originated it? People show their arrogance and foolishness to break themselves against the will of God. The misery, torment, regret, sorrow and collapse of the homes of those who defy God are evidences that people are happiest when they love God and love one another God's way.

The Way That Works

This brings us to a general statement that gives the recipe for a happy marriage. Marriages are happy when the mates love God and each other. When either is left out there is a flaw that shall plague the marriage, oftentimes until it breaks apart.

It is regrettable that many enter marriage without ever really making serious preparations for it. One should understand the nature of marriage, its purpose, and then have reverence for the institution. One should prepare himself or herself mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually for marriage. Entrance into this sacred relationship while divided on matters religious is to dare the devil. So many times a man and woman will enter marriage and never will have even discussed those things that ought to be of primary concern in their lives.

Who May Marry?

There are three classes of people that Scripture teaches are permitted to marry: (1) Those who have never married (1 Cor. 7:36); (2) those who have been married but the mate has died (Rom. 7:3); (3) those who have married and have divorced the mate because the mate was guilty of fornication (Matt. 19:9). Unless one fits into one of these classes, he does not marry with God's blessings and approval.

Too many look for guidance and counsel regarding marriage from sources that do not and will not uphold God's plan. But if you want a marriage that can reach the level of joy and happiness that God intended for it, then you must consider His ways and be wise. When a man and woman are united in Christ, and love each other more than all else except Deity, they can build on a foundation that will sustain the home in prosperity, adversity, sickness, health, good times, bad times, all times.

One may choose to remain unmarried, and there is no obligation for one to marry. Marriage is a privilege, not a duty. But should one marry, he is obligated to be governed in all matters pertaining to it by the will of God. Otherwise, whatever dire consequences that may come can only be attributed to one's own rebellion.

To the unmarried, we would urge these things upon you for consideration before entering marriage. To those who plan to be married, your very plans make consideration of these things of prime priority. To the married, even those who have not yet attained the quality of marriage that God intends, a sincere study and application of God's principles regarding the home will make the difference.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the best source of information regarding marriage?
2. Discuss the Biblical purposes for marriage.
3. What is God's attitude toward divorce?
4. For what one reason will God allow divorce?
5. Does fornication demand divorce?
6. May the guilty partner remarry?
7. What is the preventive to outside interference in a marriage?
8. To what is the relationship of Christ and the church compared?
9. What is the recipe for a happy marriage in just a few words?
10. What are the dangers of marrying a person who is not a Christian?
11. Is it wrong to remain unmarried?

The Real and the Ideal

As a person matures he encounters problems and is constantly facing the need for adjustments, decisions and selections. He must ever evaluate everything. This is an inescapable part of the maturation process.

One problem the young person meets rather early in life comes as he goes from the idealism of childhood into the realism of maturity. Everybody is somewhat shocked when reality is crammed upon them. There is a real difference in this world between what ought to be and what actually is. The very young are taught what to do and not to do. They are instructed concerning what is right as opposed to what is wrong. Deciding between right and wrong is sometimes easier than deciding between what is good, then better, then best - the ideal. From parents, Bible teachers, preachers and other sources of teaching the young are taught how things ought to be, how people should treat each other, what everyone should do and refrain from doing.

Yet, they are not very old before they are subjected to how things really are in life. They are made aware that the ideal and the measures used in teaching them are not always what they see in life. Let me illustrate.

What is Real

Young people are taught to love. But they grow up seeing so much war, hatred, killing, violence and suffering, lusting for power, lying and cheating in business and government, loafing and short-cutting on the job. They observe exploitation of the poor. They soon learn that all judges are not fair, that life is not fair, that all policemen are not honest, that every preacher is not even trying to live by what he preaches and even parents are not perfect. This is sometimes a very shattering experience.

It is aggravated in the church with division, gossip, strife, backbiting, false doctrines and such things that too often are real. In school there is cursing, smoking, drinking, immorality among their peers, drugs, etc. They may even be snubbed by those they consider friends and mocked by others when they are trying to do what they have been taught is right. The real is just so far removed from the ideal that they are frustrated.

This has been a problem for both young and old alike. Some are shocked beyond belief. Some panic and cringe in fear. Some know not what to think or to whom they can turn with confidence. Their foundations are shaken and they know all is not well. They have entered the dangerous waters of adjustment to the fact that the ideal is not the same as the real world.

Our young generation is not the first to enter such waters. Every generation does it. There is a danger to minimize the impact on the present youth, however, simply by dismissing it as something that everyone must face. I am convinced this is a very, very difficult time in which to rear children as God wants them to be. Yes, everyone must face it, but everyone does not face it successfully. Many are overcome in this transition period; they are drowned in the swirling waters of doubt and confusion. They perish before they even know there is solid ground to be found. They never recover. It is of some help to know that others have entered these hazardous waters and made it safely to the other side called adulthood without being scarred and scathed beyond repair. It is a

trying time for the young as well as their parents. But many have made the trip of transition from the ideal to the real quite well. But let us be sobered by the fact that many are not successful!

What to Do

How do you face this realistic problem? Some rebel against everything around them whatever it may be. They show their rebellion in their manners, dress, language, etc. They revolt, riot, destroy, burn, and generally create as much havoc as they think they can. They disobey every level of authority, including parents, civil law and God. They demand a change! But they are not very certain what to change, or even why. Many display an air of “down-with-everything; up-with-nothing.”

Some will attempt to pretend the inconsistencies between the real and ideal simply do not exist. They will try to ignore the gap between them. They use various forms of escapism such as mind-altering drugs, sex and alcohol. Actually this is cowardly and solves nothing for anybody. It usually aggravates problems.

Some have advocated, since the standards are not being followed, that there really is no standard, or what standards there are must be changed to fit what is. More and more people are living as if there is no right or wrong and no need to discern concerning conduct. Yet, they seem to be the most miserable of all who encounter this disparity between the real and the ideal.

Others will admit there are standards, even God-given standards, but they are too busy trying to convert God to man rather than convert man to God. They take God's Word and twist it around to make whatever they are doing acceptable. To illustrate, some have even taken the Bible to "prove" the acceptability of homosexuality.

Tragically, some give up the fight and cease to try to make any sense to life. They have never learned why they are alive. They think they cannot make it, or there is no use trying, and even destroy themselves in suicide.

The Way

While people are using all these false and ineffective means to cope with the variance between the real and ideal, let us recognize we have a problem and accept the fact as a challenge rather than an insurmountable obstacle and barrier to a good life. We can be freed by truth (John 8:32). We are not in heaven while here on earth. This earth was never designed to be our heaven. But there is hope; there is a way; there is a solution; and life is worth living once you understand your own worth and your mission in it. We must learn and follow God's truth.

How can we find the truth? Cannot we seek truth with the aid of others? Cannot we learn truth for ourselves without having to be “burned” through personal experience of “*kicking against the pricks?*” Cannot we profit from what has gone before us (Romans 15:4)?

Can we not remember that everything worthwhile has its costs? Nowhere does God promise us an easy life, a “bed of roses” without any thorns, with everything and everybody sweet and good. Even though there are glad moments and times of rejoicing it is not always that way. We soon realize that when we compare the real with the ideal. “*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*” (Second

Timothy 3:12). Christ offers us an abundant life, here and in the hereafter, but can we expect it without paying the price of conforming to His will?

Let it be insisted that each of us must learn the truth for ourselves. This does not mean you must learn every truth in every realm of human knowledge. But it does mean you must learn the truth in that which matters. But you do not have to learn every truth by yourself and throw off everything others have learned before you and taught you, but you must learn it yourself. We cannot live the life God wants of us using only a “borrowed faith.” Unfortunately, there are some who think this means we must disbelieve whatever came before us and invent something new. Not so! But we must have our own personal faith and conviction. Those who love us and teach us usually urge this even as they teach us what is of God. Wise men profit from the experiences and teaching of others who have been along the way. Wise men will give heed to the Word of God. Every generation must be taught and learn everything. When we finally accept this truism then we are in a position to pursue the truth with confidence that we can know the truth and practice the truth with success. It is a pressing urgency that we know this! There is no short-cut to spiritual victory! But there is a way because God has provided it.

God is the Way

The way to ride the tempest of the difference between the real and the ideal is to put confidence in God. Learn from His will what He says is right and wrong. This means that a knowledge of the Bible is indispensable. Many youthful “Einsteins” learn how to make a living, but never learn how to live. They cannot make proper decisions because they do not even know the seriousness of their choices let alone the standards by which choices should be made. God’s Word tells us what our goal should be and how it is to be reached. Not until a person is informed concerning the will of God can he overcome the problems the imposed adjustments demand of him.

Part of our problem in facing the ideal-real issue is the attempt to let God have His way, sometimes, but we reserve the final judgments for ourselves. Unless God rules our lives, we cannot succeed. **Compromise does not work!**

We also must resolve that we must not abandon the fight. *“Let us not grow weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”* (Galatians 6:9).

Look at Yourself

Acquire and maintain a spirit of self-examination, striving to be fair and objective as possible, considering our weaknesses, but also our strengths. An unbalanced self-evaluation will produce cross-currents in these dark waters of uncertainty that could capsize us. *“Prove your own selves,”* was Paul’s admonition. As you look at others, remove the beam from your own eye. This will enable you to see more clearly how to help others in removing their blemishes (Matthew 7:1-5). We are probably over-educated in seeing the faults of others and may curse the world in which we live. But cursing it will not correct it. How can we be of any assistance toward correction if we blind ourselves to our own faults and talents?

It helps some to realize that all mistakes and errors people make are not due to Satanic hypocrisy. Not everyone is trying to pretend to be what they really are not. Even many who blunder are sincere and striving to improve, but they are ignorant, possibly

because they prefer to be that way, but often weak, frail, but pressing on. This does not mean we ignore wrong nor allow ourselves to go along with wrong. But we must know that not everything needs changing. Only the bad needs changing. We must not throw out the good while repressing the bad. One hard lesson is learning the difference between what should be changed and what retained. But we better learn it as fast as we can!

Consider Your Heart

Face it! Our own attitude is a deciding factor in the movement from the realm of the ideal into the realm of the real. *“Let all that you do be done in love”* (First Corinthians 16:14). Do not confuse compromise with compassion, or love with license to “do-your-own-thing.” But this deals with our motives which is a matter of the heart. If we will not be self-seeking, nor seeking change for change’s sake, nor asserting our own superiority over all else, but seeking the other’s highest good as God defines the good, then we shall make a beneficial contribution in life. Love for God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, His church, His Word, His people and the people of the world will at least provide you a firm basis of operation. Without it you cannot really succeed (First Corinthians 13:1-3). We may do many things but motive is of paramount importance.

None of us are unique in facing this frustrating episode in life of witnessing the gross spread between the ideal and the real. But when we realize it exists, and get a grasp on our own foundations that are laid solidly on Christ from Biblical revelation, we will not only be victorious over it but will be a valuable assistance to many others around us in overcoming it. Complacency and indifference, like compromise, is never the right way.

We may not be able to change the world. The devil and his influence is very much in evidence. But we can brighten the corner where we are. We may not bring the world to Christ, but that is not our assigned task. It is our job to take Christ to the world. What the world does about Christ ultimately is a very personal and individual decision. We may not save the world, but like Noah, we can save our loved ones and ourselves. We shall be able to come to the close of life with the satisfaction we lived on God’s side, and we shall be met in eternity by the Savior and hear the words, *“Well, done.”* Is that not of value?

Others have met this problem and have made and are still making contributions toward the ideal in spite of the real. Now it is your turn. You might do better than those before you. But you will not do as well except God is your guide.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What problem of growing up does the child face that is discussed in this lesson?
2. What too often is their reaction to their encounter with reality?
3. Can the transition from the **ideal** to the **real** be successfully made?
4. What is the solution to the problem?
5. Discuss how compromise does not work and why.
6. Discuss how counting our strengths and our weaknesses relate to this challenge?
7. What is to be the motive behind all that we do?

Today's Youth Facing Today's Problems

Solomon advised, *“Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth...”* (Ecclesiastes 12:11). God is concerned about the spiritual welfare of youth and so should everyone be, young and old. It is in the interest of and genuine concern for their welfare that this lesson is presented. Our lesson is primarily directed toward those who are in the days of their youth and addressed to them.

There are seven facts we first must recognize. One, young people are included among those for whom God is concerned. Two, there are many problems youth must face in this world. Three, they will not be young for very long. Time will take care of that. Four, today's youth is not the first to face problems. Nor are they the only ones today facing problems. Five, youth is neither inferior nor superior to adulthood. Adulthood and youth are obviously not the same. They do not have the same responsibilities, opportunities nor capacities. Youths cannot be adults just yet and adults cannot now be youths. Adults have problems youths cannot solve, and vice versa. Farmers have problems and merchants have problems. Their problems, even though related, are not the same. Neither is superior to the other. Neither is inferior to the other. There is a great difference between adults and youths we must remember. Adults have once been youths, but youths have never been adults. Adults, therefore, have some advantage to see and understand both periods. Youths sometimes seem to forget this. Six, there are some matters which youths cannot yet handle because they are not in the position to handle them. There are matters of leadership, guidance, control and duty that pertain to adults that do not yet pertain to youths. Even though youths may be affected by many things over which they have no control, this is life. Such is true even in adulthood. Seven, there are many problems about which there is much that youths can do. In fact, if these problems are not handled now to the extent they can be, youths will be forever handicapped.

Preparation

Youth face the issue of preparedness. Many who are now adults neglected this issue and now find adulthood overbearing. Youth is a time for preparing for future life. Actually, all of life is a time for preparing for eternity. But especially are the days of youth a time to set your standards. Too many youths build ceilings over themselves while young that they cannot penetrate once they are adults. Too many leave the years of youth and enter adulthood unprepared. They must become prepared socially, mentally, physically, and most important of all, spiritually. It is tragic that emphasis is placed on lesser preparations to the neglect of the spirit.

Youth is a time for education, though not exclusively for youth. No person is truly educated who is not acquainted with the Bible. As one becomes an adult he is forced into life that demands a state of readiness. If youths have failed to prepare they face immeasurable problems. While not yet encumbered with the duties and responsibilities of

adulthood, young people need to avail themselves of opportunities to prepare themselves in all areas. Our advice to the young is, “Don’t blow your chances.”

In a Hurry

Young people often are guilty of pushing life. It may not do much good to even mention it, but it is something young people need to recognize. Youths are always wanting to be older than they are. It is somewhat like adults wanting to be younger. Youths are impatient to “grow up.” They seem to think that everything worthwhile is for later life. Grass is always greener on the other side. This is not necessarily so. Each age of life has its blessings. Youths should give life all they can give it now in the days of youth and reap the harvest. Failing to get from life what is intended in youth will make adulthood less wonderful.

Youths are somewhat like green apples. If they are not allowed to ripen they will only be hard and bitter. You cannot push the maturing process too fast or it will backfire. Growth and development always takes time.

Many parents and other adults are guilty of pushing the young into maturity before they are ready for it. They encourage early dating, clothing that is immodest, adult activities and privileges, structured and controlled activities to the extent the child does not have time nor opportunities to ever be a child. Young people are not small adults. They are young people. We should let them get the fullest from that period of life without trying to make them little adults before they are adults. They cannot successfully be little adults. We see ten and twelve year olds dressed like they were twenty-five. It is a mark of offense against the child and a manifestation of some stupidity of the adults responsible. We see teens keeping hours like they were already mature. Many have freedoms and lacking guidance that only leads to their corruption. Then we wonder why some of them get frustrated with life and burned out on life before they have hardly entered adulthood. We can understand why some youths get bored with life so early. They have been forced to live it all before their time.

Peer Pressure

Youths need to face the problem of social pressure called peer pressure. There is tremendous pressure to do what those around you are doing. All people, young and old, are subjected to the pressure to conform in order to be accepted and liked by others. This is a problem that stays with the Christian all the days of his life. But he must remember that even though he is in the world, he is not to be of the sinful world. Because this problem is a lifelong matter, young people need to learn to cope with it early in life.

Youths need to learn to be themselves and not imitations of others. They need to learn to think for themselves rather than blindly following the way of the crowd. If you follow others you will never be your own person. Surely, all should try to be socially acceptable to a degree, friendly, courteous, fair, gentle, pleasant and polite. But all must learn to stand on their own feet and be independent of others to the extent that they do not let others govern their lives. You should never compromise what is true and right before God to get along and go along with anybody. One talent youths must develop is the ability to stand even if they have to stand alone. God’s people have always had to be such people. Who makes up your mind? Who decides what you do? While you are subject to

your parents you must allow yourself to be guided by them and their guidance should be according to the Word of God. But you should not let pressure of being accepted, being liked, being popular have the controlling influence over your life. Unless you learn to discipline yourself to stand for truth regardless of others you are subject to being tossed to and fro all your life from one error to another. The guidance given you from the Word of God must be allowed to determine your life. You are most fortunate if you have parents who love you and love the Lord to instruct you in His ways. Let God be your guide. Permitting the crowd to set your standards is fatal to your soul.

Adult Hypocrisy

Youths are troubled over what they perceive to be the hypocrisy in adults. A hypocrite is one who pretends to be what he really is not and really does not intend to be. He does what he does for show. He says one thing but does another. Some of the strongest language of condemnation found in the Bible is in Matthew, chapter twenty-three, where the Lord Jesus condemned hypocrisy. That adults, as well as youths, are often guilty of this pretense is not to be denied.

Children are born into a world where everybody cares for them, every decision is made for them in their early years, and they learn to love and trust the adults around them. They assume what adults say and do is always right. But as youths grow older they come to realize that adults do not always live according to what they say nor are they always what they ought to be. Even those in whom youths have placed their confidence sometimes prove to be a heart-breaking disappointment to them. The response to this awareness that there is often inconsistency among adults sometimes causes some young people to think nobody is honest, nobody cares and nobody really is trying to do what is right. But this response is wrong and the conclusion is wrong. It is foolish to throw overboard all truth because somebody in whom we place confidence does not live according to truth. That is not the fault of the truth. We do not do this in others matters of life. Why should we do it in matters of the Bible, the church and religion? Are you going to quit going to doctors because some of them get sick? Are you going to violate the law because some law enforcement officer violates it? Shall you cease to ride in a car because some driver drives recklessly? Are you going to discard God's teaching on marriage because some divorce? Are you going to get rid of all your tires because one goes flat?

Nobody is perfect, even adults. Not all adults are hypocrites, however. All who make mistakes are not hypocrites. Adults are human beings and are facing many problems, temptations and threats of which youths are not yet aware. This is not to excuse adults for evil conduct, but it is to simply encourage youths to face realities regarding adults. Only Christ was perfect and only He is the standard by which to measure all things. Even parents are not perfect. Preachers and elders are not perfect. Young people are not perfect either.

It is a good sign that you are reaching a higher level of maturity when you can understand the difference between what a person ought to be and what he actually is and see the difference between what you have been taught and what sometimes people do. Adults may aggravate the problem for youth by their inconsistent lives, but even the youths must remember to set their sights on Christ, not on any human being. While it may be rather disturbing to go from the realm where all is sublime and be shocked into reality that all is not perfect, this is a part of leaving the innocent world of childhood and

entering into the world of reality and adulthood. Do not let human frailties shake your confidence in God.

The Problem of Sin

Youths, like adults, face the problem of sin. When one sins he sells his soul to Satan. Sin separates one from God. One cannot live his life as God would have him live it if he remains in sin. Everyone must ask, “Will I live in sin, or in Christ?” Each one must make a personal decision in this matter. These are the only two realms available in which we can live. We have to obey the gospel to enter Christ.

Today’s youth must face today’s problem of sin. It comes through drugs, alcoholic beverages (America’s number one drug problem), temptations to immorality, dishonesty, lack of respect for authority and forsaking God. But youth can face these matters and overcome them when they align themselves with their Creator and Judge. Face today, and tomorrow you will be able to face tomorrow. Unless you learn to handle today, what will be the end of you tomorrow? We cannot carry the burdens of yesterday, today and tomorrow at once. Life is to be lived one day at a time, and we are capable, in Christ, to successfully carry our load. We can have joy and gladness as we live and help others carry their load.

Following the crowd, rebelling against God, swallowing whatever you are told by the worldly sort may sound exciting, emotional, new and “cool.” But a good life is accomplished only by being good as God defines good.

The Solution

Meeting today's problems, like all other problems of life, can be met only when there is a strong and Biblical spiritual foundation and guidance. “How shall the young secure their hearts, and guard their lives from sin?” It is by following the Word of God. Youths need not despair nor be discouraged. Life in Christ is a wonderful life, full of purpose and meaning, blessings and benefits, with each day being worthwhile and productive. Problems are challenges and tests of our worth. Problems can become stepping stones rather than stumblingblocks.

When youths and adults work together before God the young can secure their place and be what God intended them to be. Nothing is more challenging than a young life. The future is open and the limits are extended. May God help us and youths everywhere to defeat the devil and bring glory to God in life.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. List the problems our youth face. Add to the ones mentioned in the lesson.
2. Suggest solutions to each of these problems.
3. How can the older generation help them face these problems?

What is That in Thine Hand?

“And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee. The Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee” (Exodus 4:1-5).

At this time Israel was in bondage in Egypt. Moses had fled Egypt into the land of Midian. God saw Israel in bondage and remembered His promise unto them. It is not that God had forgotten but that God recalled the promise. God appeared unto Moses in the burning bush and called Moses to the leadership of Israel and the task of delivering them out of the hand of the Pharaoh.

Excuses

Moses did not readily accept this assignment but offered all kinds of excuses why he should do what God wanted him to do. “Who shall I say sent me? They won’t believe me. I am not an eloquent man. I can’t speak to the people.” One excuse after another was offered by Moses.

God’s reaction to these excuses tells us something about God. He did not accept them. When God wants man to do something God will not accept man’s excuses for not doing it. We need to remember this. As God called Moses from the bush so God calls us now by the gospel (Second Thessalonians 2:14). From Luke 14, Jesus teaches us that excuses offered for not coming to that which He has prepared will not suffice.

It was in the midst of these excuses being offered by Moses that God asked, “*What is that in thine hand?*” Moses answered that he had a rod. It was a shepherd’s staff, a tool useful in guiding sheep, retrieving them from places where they might fall. It was something he used while keeping the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro. It was nothing uncommon. All shepherds had them. But it was more than just another rod when it was used as God directed. When Moses cast it down it became a serpent. When he picked up the serpent it became a rod again. It became an instrument through which the power of God was manifested. God made something great out of something very ordinary. That is what God does every time He takes a sinner and cleanses him of sin and makes him a servant of righteousness. In fact, there is not a possession, a talent, an ability that we have that cannot be great if used as God would have it used. There are things in the hands of us all that God has given us that are useful for good if only we would consider such things as potential tools with which the will of God can be accomplished.

Using the Rod

Let us look at some of the instances in which this same rod was later used to reveal the power of God. “*And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand wherewith thou shalt do*

signs” (Exodus 4:17). “And Aaron spake all the word which the Lord had spoken unto Moses. and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped” (Exodus 4:30,31). One problem Moses faced was convincing the Israelites that he was coming in the name of the Lord to deliver them. Before he could deal with the Egyptians he had to convince his own people. With this rod he did signs that brought hope to the people and persuaded them that he was from God. God’s name was praised.

When Moses went before Pharaoh and into his court he used this rod to perform miracles to convince Pharaoh to let Israel go. *“Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river’s brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand. And thou shalt say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness; and behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear. Thus saith the Lord, In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord; behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood” (Exodus 7:15-17).*

Moses also stretched this same rod over the Red Sea to divide the waters and allow Israel to pass over on dry land into safety. *“And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the mist of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians and they shall follow them: and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen” (Exodus 41:15-17).*

Prior to that momentous event Moses used the rod also in bringing the ten plagues against Egypt to compel Pharaoh to allow Israel to leave. It was that same rod that was used to strike the rock in Rephidim to provide water for the thirsty nation in the wilderness (Exodus 17:5,6). The same rod was held out by the hands of Moses over the field of battle against the Amalekites and Joshua led Israel to victory (Exodus 17:9). This was the occasion when Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses when he became too weary to hold up the rod.

What did Moses have in his hand? Just a plain, ordinary rod, a shepherd’s staff, until it was used as the Lord God of heaven had directed. Then it became a tool for performing great deeds. It became the avenue through which divine power was demonstrated. But it was just a rod until placed at the disposal of God and His purposes.

What Is That In Thy Hand?

Yes, Moses saw the rod he held, But could not see the ways
That God would use that very rod through all his future days.
Although you see your talent plain, God keeps your future sealed,
In His good time -- from year to year -- the plan will be revealed.
So hold it high or cast it down, or strike, as God will choose,
A rod in hands which He directs is one that He will use.

Ruth Johnson

There are others we could ask the same question, “What is that in thine hand?” We could ask David as he took his sling into battle against Goliath. With it God used David to take away the reproach from Israel and produce a great victory over the Philistines who had defied the army of the Lord and hence the Lord Himself.

We might ask the little lad whose name is not even given in John 6. But he had just five loaves and two fishes which Jesus used to feed over five thousand with twelve baskets full left over. His great work enabled Him to continue His work of preaching to the multitudes.

Ask the widow of Luke 21, who had only two mites; all that she had. Yet, when they were rightly used, given to God, Jesus cites her as an example of the sacrificial attitude and action that God approves by declaring that she had given more than all the others.

It will do us good to take inventory and think a while on the things God has given us. We are a blessed people. Do we count our many blessings? Among our blessings are blessings of opportunity. What kind of stewards are we with what God has placed in our hand? What do you have in your hand today that can be used for the good of mankind and to the glory of God?

In Our Hands

I want to mention only one thing even though there are many. If we were assembled in a congregation, I would likely ask you to stand when I asked the following questions in order to impress upon you the personal application that this lesson deserves. I would ask all who are fathers, grandfathers, mothers, grandmothers, aunts, uncles or teachers to stand. All of these have a vital influence on the lives of the young. These are those who love children and seek their welfare. “What do we have in our hands?” That’s right! We have our children. They are given to us by the Lord and placed in our care. They are blessings and they are opportunities. They are living souls waiting to be molded and shaped into desirable vessels much as a potter might mold and shape soft clay. We are stewards of this sacred trust. Each child is a potential power for good or for evil. We are lives that shall never end. Each is a soul that will exist somewhere throughout eternity.

To such a great extent, whether our children will be blessings or curses, useful or harmful vessels, good or evil influences, servants of God or of Satan, exist in heaven or in hell, depends upon us in whose hands they are entrusted. So precious and pure is the little child. Jesus said, “*Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 18:3). Jesus used children to illustrate what the kingdom is. Who is more teachable, impressionable and more easily molded than the child? One has written, “Just as the twig is bent, the tree’s inclined.” Who manifests greater trust and at the same time is more dependent than a little child?

But what we must realize is that what my child grows up to be, for the most, part depends on me. William Ross Wallace wrote a century ago, “The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.” This is because by and through our children we exert a tremendous and lasting influence on the world. What will we do with this gift that has been placed in our hands?

What is Happening?

It is dreadful to see what some do and have done. They have neglected the child, ignored him and failed to consider his worth and turned the care and training into the hands of another. Sometimes for no greater reason than getting more money, parents leave the molding of their children to somebody else. Many parents can say, "I gave him money but what he needed was me. I provided gold and gain, when he longed for guidance, and for God."

One of the tragedies becoming so rampant in our society is child abuse. This takes form both physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Many neglected children have warm houses in which to live, money to spend, good clothes to wear and plenty of food. But they do not have the love, security and guidance they desperately need. They do not have that Christian home.

We have lost and are losing so many of our children to the ways of the sinful world. They have not been taught nor had demonstrated before them morality, the do's and don't's of God and the glory of the church.

But let us not just here concern ourselves with what others do or have done with their children. What will we do with our own? We are not discussing the HOW so much just now as we are trying to emphasize the NEED of using this gift to God's glory. For many children there is nothing much that can be done more than has been done. They have reached a level of growth where the parental influence is minimal. But many have their children who are yet very young and still subject unto them.

God wants us to love them, provide for them, teach their tender hearts His truth and provide for them goals and ambitions of righteousness. He wants us to train up that child in the way that he should go. He wants us to bring them up in His nurture and admonition (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4). He wants us to do more than teach them how to make a living, but how to live, not just in this world, but in the world to come. We can provide them all this world has to offer, and yet, we fall miserably if we have not taught and showed them how to love God and respect His Holy Word. So tremendous is our task and so great is our opportunity.

But we also have assistance available to us in this awesome task. We have the privilege of prayer. We have His word of instruction, the Bible. We have the encouragement of those who have gone before us who have done well in the guidance of their children. We have the encouragement of others who are busy at the same task we are trying to perform.

Both by teaching and by providing a wholesome example we rear our children in the way of the Lord, giving them a rich religious heritage which shall be a bulwark for them throughout life. But we must ask ourselves, "What will my children hear and see from me?"

Yes, we have much in our hands. We can succeed. But we cannot lead where we will not go. We want to lead them to God through Christ. But we must go that way ourselves.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In what Biblical context is the question of our lesson found?
2. What was God's attitude toward Moses' excuses?
3. What did Moses accomplish when he used what God gave him?
4. What do we have in our hands?
5. What is it that is more important for the young than material things?
6. How does prayer assist in using what is in our hands?

What it Means to Grow Up

We begin with two scriptures as our test: *“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man I put away childish things”* (First Corinthians 10:13).

“He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:10-15).

Both passages have to do with the matter of “growing up.” We are to grow up physically and spiritually. Life is a process of growth from one level to another. And none can deny that the years of the young, and often of the older, the “growing up years,” can be very difficult years. As one young person put it, “One minute it seemed like everybody took for granted that I knew what to do when I really did not; and the next minute everybody was telling me what to do as if I knew nothing.”

Growth Involves Everyone

The more adult years have their problems of growth also. Sometimes people think that the younger years were easier. The young years have their difficulties to the young just as the older years have their difficulties to the older. Because we are all in the process of “growing up” it seems appropriate to understand just what this means.

In the physical world we expect growth. It seems that the passing of the calendar takes care of that if all is normal and well. Just a few months, a few years, then one matures physically. What many do not seem to understand is that the outward, visible and physical growth is not the whole story. In fact, it is not even the most important part of growth. The big part is the inner growth, the maturing of the mind, judgment, thinking and self-control. This has always proven to be more difficult.

It is unfortunate that many young people place a ceiling on their lives while they are young. Instead of building foundations they are erecting ceilings through which they shall never penetrate. They fritter away their time and opportunities for growth. I suppose we all have done this to some extent and we live to regret it. Youth has time, ability and opportunity to lay the groundwork for a fine and useful life. But the failure to seize these swiftly passing opportunities and use these qualities will restrict one’s usefulness and happiness in life. Once the young years are spent and the record made it cannot be changed. One of man’s strongest desires is to be able to start all over and do differently. The very best we can do is to start from where we are. The past cannot be undone. What a tragedy that some build their ceilings through neglect of education, wasting the development of the mind, forming attitudes and habits that harm his character and potential. While the young often resent being told, it is still true that youth is the time for

gathering information, building habits and attitudes and properly laying good foundations upon which to build life.

Measuring Maturity

We measure maturity in various ways. Birthdays are chronological measures but not always a very accurate measure of maturity. Some live decades and never grow up in the things that matter.

Physical size is sometimes used to measure but that is also a very fallible standard by which to measure real maturity. Boys of fifteen are often larger than many two and three times their age. But nobody would contend that a fifteen year old has reached maturity. Years ago my grandmother would have considered a boy to be a man once he began to wear long pants. But that is a fallacious idea. Girls thought that once they wore high heels they were grown. It seems laughable, doesn't it? People may look grown and be far from it.

Isn't it pitiable that somehow we have "educated" our society to think that the use of profanity, cigarettes, disrespect of authority, wild driving, strange dress and late hours are marks of maturity? So much that is mistakenly called "adult" today is more "adultery" than adulthood.

What are the real elements that determine whether one is grown up? One element is the way a person spends his time. Here is a real clue. Some have a distorted idea of bigness. Those who waste their time in constant play and watching television have hardly begun to grow. Having access to a car, seeing all the movies and being an athletic hero are life's goals for the immature. "When I get like that, I have arrived," is their idea.

But as one really grows up he sees things in a better and different light, the light of experience and reality. He realizes just how foolish and childish such things are. These are not evidences of being grown. They are evidences that there is much growing to be done.

We are taught to redeem the time, take advantage of it and use it wisely and constructively. Life is composed of time and we ought make every minute count. Those who realize that show signs of maturity. While we do not expect the young to fully grasp this, the fact that they do not is evidence of their immaturity. But it is something you should expect from those who claim to be mature.

Values and Maturity

What do you consider to be the real values of life? This helps to determine your level of maturity. Many go through life and never learn what matters. When we want to know the value of things we often turn to a catalog and check the prices. God's book is a catalog of what is valuable in life and we need to be better acquainted with it. If you want to know whether something is worthwhile or not, see what the Lord thinks about it. How does it fit into His standard of things?

What a person thinks of others and how he treats them is a mark of maturity or the lack of it. How does he consider the authorities over him, parental, civil, religious, educational and occupational? The immature person resents authority over him. He feels depressed and that somehow others are taking advantage of him. He refuses to abide by the law; reneges on his agreements; is irresponsible in his work; cannot be depended

upon; even rebels against the authority of God. No person is mature until he realizes that he is accountable to God for all of his life and everything pertaining to it. That individual who has the idea that the world orbits around him and for him and to satisfy him is sorely off beat. He will have little to no regard for others and consider everybody out of step but himself. He simply has not grown up. His reactions to whatever gets in his way reflects his maturity. The immature will pout, cry, kick, scoff and lash out. The mature person realizes that such is a part of life, takes it in stride and keeps on his own path without hesitation or distraction.

Making Choices

One of the biggest factors in growing up is the ability to make decisions. We all have to make so many of them. True enough, many of the decisions we make are relatively insignificant. But some are life forming and determine our eternity.

Some never learn to make decisions. They were never allowed to make them when they were growing up. They were never taught standards by which to make an intelligent decision. Therefore, when they reach a point in life that they are called upon to make decisions, they know not which way to turn. Learning how to make decisions is such an important part of maturation.

Someone has said, "In each boy or girl there are a number of different selves. There is an honest self and a dishonest self. There is a truthful self and an untruthful self. There is a kind and generous self and an unkind self. There is a selfish self and an unselfish self. There is an obedient self and a disobedient self." In this matter of growing up each one must determine which of these selves will be the real you. As one decides to be honest, truthful, kind, selfless and obedient he is making great strides toward real maturity.

The Inspired Window

Think for a moment about Moses. The Bible is a magnificent window through which we can see this man as he grows up. *"By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward"* (Hebrew 11:24-26). The American Standard Version translates *"come to years"* with the words, *"grown up."* When Moses was *"grown up,"* when he was truly mature, he decided against the ways of sin and decided to be God's person. He might have had everything else that this world could offer, but he was wise enough and mature enough to make the right decision. He chose God's way.

All of the big decisions are not made in the capitals of the world's nations. Bigger events are taking place in the lives of people everyday, everywhere. While some may consider the conquests of Caesar to be the outstanding events of the first century that which was far more important was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus to the faith of Christ. Even today, as the leaders of the world ponder the gigantic ills and tensions, there may well be a decision made in the mind of some boy or girl that will have a greater effect in years to come on the world, or even have a bearing on things eternal. The decision to be a Christian is the most significant decision that a human being can make.

In God's Image

Every young person ought to believe in himself or herself. Each must remember that he or she is created in God's image and each counts before God. There are things of eternal value that can be accomplished when one goes God's way. Anyone choosing a goal and purpose in life that fits God's purposes has the assurance that God will be with him.

The greatest need of our world is more truly devout Christian men and women. Our needs are not for faster aircraft or rockets to take men to the moon. We need lives that will take people to heaven. Our need is not more missiles, but morals. We need not have creeds, but Christ. Physical food, as essential to life as it is, is not as needful as the spiritual milk that nourishes the soul. We need Christians to counterbalance the increasing wickedness and degeneracy of the world. We need those who will use what God has given them, prepare themselves and be exhausted in His service of doing good. To have that takes mature people.

The Day of Maturity

Every life has what we call "red-letter days," that is, days that mark the more important events, such as the day of our birth, our marriage, our first job, etc. The greatest day in anyone's life is the day that they declare, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," and then render obedience in baptism into Christ. All other days take a second place to that one. On that day you begin to do the things for which you were created; namely, to bring glory to God by your life. That is a mark of real growth. The rest of life continues to be a process of growth until that notable day of death when we pass from this world to the next. Unless we reach sufficient maturity to be ready for that day, our lives and our existence will have been for nought. Our regret will be eternal. Our immaturity will have taken us to our destruction.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are the ways children should and do grow?
2. Do we ever cease the need to grow?
3. How do you define true maturity?
4. How do your values reflect your level of maturity?
5. How did Moses show he had matured?
6. What is the result of remaining spiritually immature?

What the Young Deserve

People talk a lot about underprivileged young people. Do such really exist? Our answer is, "Yes." But many are not underprivileged in the way many people think when they talk about the underprivileged. Usually people mean that some young people are lacking the material things of life. They grow up in poverty or inadequate educational opportunities. This is too often true of both young and older people. Often the young are victims of circumstances over which they have no immediate control. With many who are older their difficult circumstances are sometimes self-imposed, but not always.

Materially underprivileged children are said to be the cause of juvenile delinquency. It is true that many poor children get into trouble. But it is not because they are poor. Many people who are poor never get into trouble because of stealing, fighting, etc. On the other hand, there are many who are reared in the lap of luxury who get into all kinds of trouble. So the factor causing juvenile delinquency must be something other than material wealth or the lack of it.

There are those things that young people deserve; things they ought to have; things that the older generation owes them. Too often we hear people clamoring, "I want my rights. I want what is coming to me." This may sound fair, but if the truth were known, what they deserve is not always what they want.

We hear much about the "generation gap" and how the older generation has failed the oncoming one. In many instances this is true. It is not true with all and with most there is no generation gap. There are those who would like to destroy the work of parents and create and exploit their creation of a generation gap. Generations have always looked at things from different viewpoints, as would be expected. But generations have always learned to live happily together when both follow the Lord. Possibly this generation gap does exist with many because young people have not received what they deserve, or want what they do not deserve. Too many are over privileged in matters that do not matter and are underprivileged in matters that really matter.

What is Undeserved

Let us consider some things young people do not deserve and have no right to expect to be handed them. The world does not owe them a living. Work is a four-letter word that many young people think only applies to somebody else. Paul taught work. Jesus worked. The Father works. Work is not a curse nor a part of a curse. It is a cure to many ills and a blessing. No work; no eat, is a Biblical principle that ought to be applied more than it is.

The world owes nobody pleasure, luxury, ease and freedom from problems and responsibilities. The world owes nobody success. Success depends on the person as much as any other factor. Ten per cent inspiration and ninety per cent perspiration usually is the stuff from which success is made.

The world owes nobody freedom and escape from the consequences of behavior. We reap as we sow. To the young Solomon wrote, "...but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9). We are accountable for our conduct. Today many are crying it is the fault of society for whatever happens to them,

never the individual. That is foolishness gone to seed. Nobody makes you act like a devil. Nobody forces another to behave worse than animals. People are responsible and they have no right to be immune from the consequences of their behavior.

The world does not owe anybody happiness. That great blessing comes from within as one conforms to the will of God. It is not created by the environment. Environment has a part in how we feel about things. But one can have that inward blessedness regardless of his environment.

No person can ever deserve heaven. We cannot earn it, merit it, deserve it or erase one sin by ourselves. Sinners deserve condemnation.

Human Rights

Please note that the Declaration of Independence declares the truth that there are certain inalienable rights a person has by virtue of the fact that he or she is a person, a human being. Of course, if evolution is true there would be no basis for human rights because we would all just be highly evolved animals. Evolution destroys human dignity and all reason to treat other humans with consideration befitting the human race. Young people have rights because they are human beings. This includes the unborn child in the mother's womb. This is ordained by the Lord because He created man in His spiritual image. When these inalienable rights are violated the abuser should be punished and restrained. Just what all these rights include are matters of great disagreement. But we do not have the right to deprive others of their rights in order to obtain ours. No man has a right to mistreat his neighbor.

Concerning young people, it must be realized that their rights must correspond to their responsibility and duty. Some want rights without assuming responsibility for properly using those rights. They want privileges without duties. Young people are deserving all the same rights as an adult when they can assume the same duty as adults that go along with those rights. This is one of the causes of the generation gap. Rights without responsibility is the watchword for too many youths.

What is Deserved

What do young people deserve? They deserve proper instruction, training and discipline. God said to parents, "*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*" (Proverbs 22:6). "*Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4). We pity that poor underprivileged child who has never had parents to show him the difference between right and wrong, or chastised him when he violated the right, and rewarded and encouraged him when he did the right and avoided the wrong. How else can a young person know if he is not taught? There is nothing inherent or innate in him that tells him right from wrong. That is a matter of training and teaching. He deserves to receive this.

It is not love to indulge the child and deprive him of the knowledge of the will of God. "*My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother*" (Proverbs 1:8). Similarly we read words of wisdom as "*Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding*" (Proverbs 4:1). "*My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother*" (Proverbs 6:20). "*He that*

spareth his rod, hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Proverbs 13:24). “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15). “Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell” (Proverbs 23:13,14). “Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old” (Proverbs 23:22). “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Proverbs 29:15). Any child, allowed to reach physical maturity without instruction, training, discipline and example is underprivileged.

Some have gone to the sinful extreme in correcting children and abused the child. This is neither taught, warranted nor sanctioned by the will of God. Discipline is not the same as child abuse. Older people must learn the distinction.

Blessings of Duty

Young people deserve having duties to perform according to their ability Youth is not a time for the fulfillment of all of the matters of life, but a time for preparation. A young person is not supposed to be an adult nor supposed to live all the phases of life in their youth as if they were small adults. Many parents have not yet learned this important point and treat their children as if the children were just smaller adults and must be involved in adult matters on a smaller scale. This is nonsense! Children need chores and work to teach them to be responsible and to learn the job of doing tasks successfully.

They cannot handle adult matters but there are things they can do. Yes, they often fuss about it, like adults do, but the adage is still true, “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.”

Life imposes responsibilities. The sooner one learns to deal with duty the sooner he will be equipped for the realities of life. Doing everything for them is not really helping them, but hindering their development.

Christ and the Home

Young people deserve a home where Christ reigns supreme; where there is love, consideration, sympathy, kindness, a strong father and mother image, where successes are shared with enthusiasm and where failures are shared so they can be turned into advantages and learning experiences alongside encouragement to overcome obstacles and disappointments.

A home that provides security and comfort, where the rule is to love God’s way, is a home that is truly a blessing to the young. We may be able to teach our young how to make a living but fail to teach them how to live.

Young people deserve a home where each person is appreciated and loved. Some get sick of home and leave it as soon as they are able. Others, when they leave, get homesick, because they remember the love of the home. Home is where one is accepted and loved for what he or she is, but always being encouraged to be what you ought to be and are capable of being. Home may include criticism, but corrective and constructive criticism in kindness and helpfulness.

A good home is not determined by the address, household furnishings, the number

of cars in the garage or driveway. The humblest of dwellings are often the best homes. A good home is determined by love, loyalty to Christ and one another, where all are taught to respect the respectable and have reverence for Deity. Parents have the duty to set the tone for the home in such things. Young people are underprivileged and deprived when such as this is lacking.

There is a moving story about a lady who once answered a knock at her door and a little boy asked, "Does Jesus live here?" This is a question everyone of us ought to ask regarding our homes and strive to make it a place where Jesus lives.

Right to Obey

Young people have the right to obey God when they reach accountability. "*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth...*" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Young people deserve an example before them of obedience to the gospel. Parents cannot lead where they will not go. How will children ever be impressed with the need to obey the gospel when father or mother or both ignore the Lord and refuse to obey Him?

Young people deserve the opportunity to develop their talents. They deserve the opportunity to learn and study the Lord's Word. They deserve Christian association to aid them in their upbringing. The church seldom overcomes the influence of the home in matters of leading children to Christ. Young people have a right to a good church that is interested in their soul.

No person, young or older, has a right to live life any way he pleases, but as God pleases. God gave life. Life belongs to God. To deprive God of our life is to take from Him what belongs to Him.

We might suggest many other things young people deserve and we may be able to provide many things for them. But if we fail them in their training, instruction, discipline, work, example and service to God through Christ, we have sinned against the child and we have failed them in what matters most.

The young person deserves a place of refuge in his years of growth. Home should be his haven where he or she can take problems, frustrations, joys, and where self-esteem can be developed, respect for authority held aloft and God is the ruler of home.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How do you define an underprivileged child?
2. Does poverty cause delinquency?
3. Do riches prevent delinquency?
4. Name some things young people do not deserve.
5. What do young people truly deserve?
6. Who has the primary duty to provide for children what they deserve?
7. How can the church help in this matter?

What Will You Leave Your Children?

“A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children...,” (Proverbs 13:22).

If you are so blessed as to have children there will come the day, providing the normal and expected process of life applies to you, when you will leave your children. You will have lived, worked, provided, given, guided and loved, but finished your association with them. Will you leave them money, property, a business, farms, etc.? A parent has not done nearly enough if all he leaves his children are material things.

We should concern ourselves about leaving them something that will endure when all the treasures of earth will have perished, as they must. *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”* (Matthew 6:19-21). We must leave them something to help them in life and prepare them to die and meet God in judgment, which we all must do.

We need to leave them that which will outlive us, and even them, and can be passed on to your children’s children. It is not a question whether we will leave our children. We will. And we will leave everything. As a man asked upon the death of a very wealthy man, “How much did he leave?” The answer is, “He left it all.” The question is what shall we leave them. We provide for them in this life as is our duty. But does it stop with our death? First Timothy 5:8, *“But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”* Much more needs to be provided than the material and physical needs of life.

A Faith to Live By

Hebrews 11:6, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him...,”* Faith provides hope, guidance, forgiveness, security, purpose in life and dignity. To neglect providing opportunity for your children to believe is the worst sort of neglect and is to sin against the child. There is only one faith (Ephesians 4:5), **THE** faith, the faith of Christ. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Leave your children a faith founded on God’s Word.

A Deep Love For The Word

Closely akin to providing a faith, help them develop a deep and sincere love and commitment to the Word of God. This, as noted, is the source of our faith (Romans 10:17). Ephesians 6:4, *“...but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”* Proverbs 22:6. *“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”* Psalm 199:97, *“O, how love I thy law...”* Biblical illiteracy is rampant in our world, even among members of the church. Much fault lies in homes where efforts to

teach the children the message of the Bible are not being made. We see parents urging them to learn and develop in so many things, lesser things, that have their place. But what of the most important knowledge of all?

Priorities, Values, Morals, Standards, Goals, Duty

The virtues of the title of this section do not just happen to come into one's possession. We are not born with the proper virtues and attitudes. We have to learn them. Whose responsibility is it to see that your children learn what is right in these areas? You know it is your duty toward them.

Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14, *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God and keep his commandments. for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment , with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."* Matthew 6:33, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...."*

They must learn personal responsibility and accountability before God. They have obligations that only they can discharge. Should we allow them to think life is solely for selfish gain, or for service to God and others? While they must mature to make their own decisions, we must provide them the basis upon which wise decisions can be made. They must respect the value of their soul. Matthew 16:20, *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall he give in exchange for his soul."* From parents children must learn what is the true measure of success. Will you leave that correct measure with them?

A Good Example

Paul wrote, First Corinthians 11:1, *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."* Christ is our ultimate example (First Peter 2:21). We cannot train our children only with words, but also deeds. We must demonstrate truth, morality, honesty, industry, worship, love and all the Christlike virtues. They will remember more your example than your words. What you really were will stay with them more than what you have said, even though your words are also important.

The problem many young people have is that they cannot get over the bad example set before them by parents. Therefore, there results confusion, frustration and disappointment created when they hear one thing from parents, but see something in their lives quite contrary to it. You will not be the perfect parent, but you can be a good example and show the right path by deeds. We say children need role models, and well they do. Parents should be the number one role models. You cannot lead where you will not go.

A Good Name

Proverbs 22:1, *"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold."* What will be your reputation? Will you have so lived as to smear the family name with stains and shame that they will have to bear all their lives? Or will they be provided something for which to live, something to admire, something for which to strive themselves?

Will they have something to live up to, or something to live down? What we do

affects us, but far more than ourselves for the present. It affects oncoming generations. The difference between character and reputation is well known. Nobody can mar our character but ourselves. But we can also mar our reputations. We should strive to live so that when we leave our children we have not blemished either one.

Good Memories of Home

We should make our home an environment of kindness, comfort, a haven of encouragement, where everyone is challenged to do their best and be their best. Especially is this essential in the formative years of our children. We must think about what we shall leave our children long before the time approaches that we must leave. We must start early.

Our homes must manifest love, security, fidelity, discipline and correction which reflects care. One of greatest gifts a father and mother can provide for their children is their love for each other. Homes must be places where acceptance is evident, even as improvement is needed. Let there be joy in the home.

Some homes are battlegrounds where there is abuse, loud and hostile words, ridicule and anger. We have heard it often, “Be it ever so humble, there’s no place like home.” It need not be a mansion, but it is a relationship of each family member to the other where the will of the Lord rules and reigns and everyone is committed to Him.

Home is where everybody counts, everybody is respected, where forgiveness is offered, and where, “I’m sorry”, may often be heard because it is needful. The primary duty of parents is to provide such things for their children. Guidance, advice, counsel and even rebuke are all vital elements in considering what we shall leave them.

Are You a Faithful Christian?

Many children have never known a Christian father or mother. They do not know the blessings of a home where Christ is King. They are deprived of knowing by experience what God intends every child to know and have. Children need to have the knowledge that parents respected the authority of God, loved the Lord, obeyed His will, worshipped Him, lived like Christ, valued His church, knew the soul is precious and is to be saved from sin. There is more to life than the here and now. There is a hell to shun and a heaven to gain. Your children need to have the assurance of comfort that comes from hope that can be their own when they belong to the Christ, like you belong to Christ.

The Final Time

There will be the hour, the final hour, when your children shall view your physical body for the last time. Then, possibly more than ever before, will the importance of heritage have meaning for them. You will have transmitted something to them, and they will have acquired from you a legacy. What kind of legacy will you have provided your loved ones? I think of this often, and more often as the years pass by. It is important. I know how important it has been to me regarding my own parents. Doubtless, many readers of these words know first hand of that which I write.

Many people are concerned about how much money their children may get from them as heirs. That may be all right, but dare we neglect the greater matters?

The inheritance of my children depends on what I am doing now. When they pass before my coffin, look upon my face, think about me and my time with them, will they know I have considered these things, thought of each of them, and included them in my daily prayers as the cherished persons they are? Will they take my body to the grave and be able to thank God that I left them what matters?

God has provided for His children an “*inheritance incorruptible, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven....*” Let us leave our children the hope of that inheritance.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Have you considered the inheritance you will leave?
2. Will it be something lasting or temporary?
3. Will it be material or also spiritual?
4. What are good memories of home?
5. Name other items you should leave them.
6. Discuss: You will leave them, but what?

When Children Go Wrong

Most anything regarding our children tugs at our hearts. Some things written here may be disturbing to some, but they are not said to condemn, but to encourage those who still have opportunity to rear their children properly. What is said may also be a source of consolation and comfort to those whose children have disappointed them. We do not want to add to the hurt, but to offer help. We may not, but we want to try. We shall approach this mostly from the parent's vantage point, what they might do, with some words to others.

It is not uncommon anymore to hear about a son who has become involved with drugs, a daughter who gets pregnant out of wedlock, young people who have quit the church, run away from home or ruined their marriage. It seems all the efforts parents have made to rear their children have been wasted and the children have turned against them and their training. These things are all too real and frequent. First Peter 5:8, *“Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”*

Many people are severely hurting because of such things and are carrying great burdens in the heart. They are very disappointed in their children. While they may take pride in them in some matters, such is not true in the most important matter, their loyalty to God. They tried, but are now hurt deeply with much joy being drained from life. If this be your lot, you are not alone. That brings no comfort, but it is a fact. God also knows this hurt.

Parents Burdened With Guilt

Parents burden themselves with guilt, asking, “Where did I go wrong?” Many times they did go wrong, but not always. But they have regret and do not understand why things are as they are. Proverbs 22:6 places great responsibility on the parent, as does Ephesians 6:4, and some are sure they failed somewhere. Possibly so! But the parent may not have been totally at fault every time a child goes wrong. The child must go the way he is trained.

Doing your parental duty does not deprive the child of his power of personal choice or personal responsibility. If one could not behave contrary to his rearing it would be impossible to convert a person who was reared in sin and then bring him to righteousness. While this does not minimize parental duty, it does say loudly that it is not the parent ALONE who is at fault, and possibly the parent is not at fault at all. Much depends on the child and also other influences that come in the life of a child over which the parent may have no control.

Who is at Fault?

Assigning blame may seem inappropriate, but it is well that we notice parental duties in their own behavior, examples, teaching, etc. But even God does not keep His children faithful unless the child cooperates with God. If God cannot do it, how do we

expect to do it?

There are no perfect parents just as they are no perfect children. But when a parent has been at fault, he or she needs to repent and seek God's forgiveness. It may be too late to change the direction of the child, but the parent's soul can still be saved. The consequences may always be suffered by both parent and child for parental failure, just like suffering will be caused by children's lack of cooperation with their training. But whoever is at fault and whatever the fault may be, it can be forgiven when God's terms are met in humble obedience.

Now What?

Assigning blame may not helpful at this point. Wrong has been done somewhere when anybody goes wrong. But where do we go from here? We cannot undo what has been done. Will things be better? Can they be better? We must start now from where we are. Let us make a few suggestions that we are sure are practical and workable. These suggestions are not to be viewed as solutions, however. Only repentance and the return of the child to the fold of God solves the problem.

Some Don't's

Don't "burn all bridges." Try to maintain some contact if it is allowed to you. How can you be an influence for good if there is a total void of communication? Harsh words, barriers and bitterness will only aggravate the situation.

This does not mean to leave the impression you condone their unfaithfulness. You should never do that. It may not be easy, seeing the keen disappointment, to keep from constantly reminding your child of his neglect. When you know so clearly right from wrong, and know your child knows right from wrong but does not live accordingly, that is not easy. The entire situation is not one that lends itself to ease. But anger, arguments and cutting words will not be productive or helpful for an eventual restoration, which is the goal.

If you as a parent have missed your opportunity by your own fault and neglect, ask God to forgive you. If you have been guilty of making matters worse since your child went astray, ask both the Lord and your child to forgive you. It is never wrong to admit our own errors.

Don't give up on your child. There may be times when you feel you are losing the battle. But you cannot afford to give up for then you have truly met defeat. To not give up may be very trying because the child may seem to have totally ruined his life and there seems to be no reconciliation between you and your child, or between your child and God. Many parents have just about lost hope that one or more of their children will ever come to Christ. Still the parent must hope, not only for his own welfare but for that of the child.

Keep in mind, your child may not act like he is disappointed in himself, but very likely he is and all spark of desire to do right is not extinguished. You may not live to see the day when your child comes to Christ, or is restored. Many people are not converted until later in life after faithful parents have gone to their reward and they with grieving hearts because their children were not saved. But if you will persist and never give up, possibly this will in time so influence your child that he will favorably respond to the

Lord's call. Possibly he will not, but many have and your child may also. You cannot afford of ever give up. Your hope may be the only avenue and source of hope for the child right now.

Giving Up Some Things May Be Required

I recall a circumstance where a faithful preacher's daughter became an atheist. You can imagine the heartbreak of the preacher and his wife. (This daughter eventually was restored, however). You may have to swallow your pride for surely you are embarrassed when your child goes wrong. You wonder what others will think of the child and you. It hurts so much. What will the neighbors say? What will brethren think? It matters to you. But parents must put that aside as best they can, and keep going. Again, like the other suggestions, this one is not easily done. Your pride may be offended.

We have to learn to give our children the control of their lives. Having been their watchman for so long, this is not a trifle task. But they must know that you are no longer responsible for their soul. It is up to them whether they go to heaven or hell.

You might have to consider canceling financial help if such you are providing. You, as a child of God, cannot afford to finance the works of the devil, even if they are being done by your own flesh and blood. But constantly shaming them will likely repel them. Once they know of your strong disapproval of their waywardness, then you have to let it be as it is, whatever that may be.

Protect Yourself

It is most difficult to accept, but it may well be that in dealing with your wayward child you are dealing with one who is very insensitive to your feelings or your convictions. While you care so much for them, they may not care in return as they ought. It is not selfish under those conditions to protect yourself from having your feelings walked on. Your child may play on your emotions and even promise many things in order to get from you whatever he wants, whether it be money, approval, commendation, acceptance, whatever. Then, before you know it, your emotions are crushed once again. Don't let it happen. Don't allow yourself to be his doormat and be used by him, keeping you ever upset, and imposing his ways, which you deplore, upon you.

You do not have the obligation to provide him a place to sin, whether it be for drinking, adultery, or any other sin. Let him know sinful behavior will not be permitted at your house, and he either conforms to that or must find another residence. The Lord's will must come first with you before the whims of a rebellious child. You are concerned about them, but they should not be permitted to crush your every waking moment and times of joy because of his conduct and attitude. You have to pull away enough to let him fall into the hands of God's providence whichever way he goes.

Continue In Prayer

You should never cease to pray for a wayward child. Don't you know the father of the prodigal was ever looking down the road, longing for that day when the son would return home? But you are God's child and have the right to pray. The fruition of your prayer may not come in your lifetime, however.

Love Your Child

This is probably a superfluous reminder because your concern is evidence of your continuing love. But love the child in the sense of always seeking his highest good. You will not seek his good if you ever compromise with his sinfulness. But always be ready to meet him more than halfway if ever he decides to come back. Let him know that is your attitude, but the decision rests with him because you cannot do it for him.

Be ready to receive him back if he comes back. If he repents and returns, let the past die. It was so hard to see him go away because you knew he going the wrong direction, but leave the door ajar and let him know it awaits his return. Again, it is his move.

Keep God First

Above all else, keep God first in your own life or else both you and your child shall suffer condemnation. God is the source of our strength, our hope, the anchor of our souls. We dare not let anyone, even those so close as children, come between us and God. Our loyalty is to God before our loyalty to our children.

The Attitude of Others Toward Parents of Children Who Have Gone Wrong

Let me address those who have seen the wayward ways of children of other people. Surely, if we be of the Christlike spirit we grieve for them as well as the child. This may not be our own burden in life, and it may not be because we have been so much better parents. Conditions and circumstances may have been so different. Under like conditions, we may not have done as well. But be thankful if your home has not been victimized by children who have gone wrong. But be sympathetic and kind toward those who have been hurt.

Don't avoid them. Be friends. Usually we are so afraid we will say or do something that will be wrong and make matters worse. It is that way when you speak with orphaned children, a widow, someone terminally ill, or a divorcee. You may not do just exactly the best in every instance. But being aloof as if you no longer care can be far worse than a thoughtless or ignorant blunder. We can correct those things. They need our presence. Be ready to listen if they ever wish to discuss it, but let them introduce the subject lest you reintroduce more pain. It is already so painful for them. Show your interest in their welfare.

When a child goes wrong it is not the time to offer unsolicited advice, or to give rebukes. Have respect for their privacy. Do not pry for details. If they speak with you in confidence, respect that confidence to the utmost. Do not talk about the situation to others unless it is a proper effort to give genuine assistance. The less said under conditions of departure from God may be the better course to follow. Look for opportune times to assist in recovering the fallen. Remember the admonition, Galatians 6:1, "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*"

Help the suffering parents to know their own worth. Having experienced this tragedy in life, they may now be equipped to help others more than ever before who are

also beset with such things. Help them see their usefulness. They are not total failures. Their loved ones have hurt them, so do not hurt them further.

Suggestions, Not Solutions

As stated earlier, these are suggestions, but not the real solution. The solution is for a child who has gone wrong to repent and return to God and be received again. It will try the limits of your patience, no doubt. It may take some time, maybe longer than your life. Be aware that it may never happen. But what has passed, has passed, and you have to do your best from this point forward. You have to forget, to some extent, the past, and press on, or else your own soul may be lost. What else can you do?

To Children

Let me say a closing word addressed to children. Be careful what you do, what you say, where you go, how you treat your parents. If you put God first in life you will deal with your parents properly. That is a part of being a Christian. Like the loyalty of your parent must be toward God before you, your loyalty must be toward God before them. But avoid causing pain and grief.

I wish there was something more constructive I could pass to you who have suffered with children who have gone wrong. I only pray that God will bless you as you deal with it. May it be that all will be well with your soul. Above all, stay with God!

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Are parents always the blame for children going wrong?
2. How do parents usually consider themselves when their children go wrong?
3. Discuss: The past is past and we must start from here.
4. How do you feel about the suggestions listed what NOT to do?
5. How much does pride affect the way we react?
6. Why do some give up on God when their children go wrong?
7. What should be our attitude and action toward those whose children have gone wrong?
8. What is the value of not giving up on the child who has gone wrong?

Which Way? The Home

The home is the basic unit of society, the source from which everything else comes. Homes will supply the factories, schools, businesses, churches, government officials, leaders, teachers, doctors, accountants, engineers, preachers and the rest. The home is the spring of civilization. Society cannot rise higher than the spring from which it comes. The home molds the values, priorities, morals, human relationships and just about everything else in society. It is a true saying, "The hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world."

We are aware how lessons that ask, "Which Way?" regarding the church, nation, and home are somewhat discouraging. We wish it was not that way. They are depressing to prepare, deliver and read. But do we think things will be as they ought to be if we just bury our heads in the sand, as it were, and pretend all is well when all is not well?

The only ones who can be pleased with the direction of the family and homes in America are those who are either naive, blind, ignorant, morally degenerate, do not care or who seek the downfall of good things. This is not to contend that everything in every home is bad, but the direction generally is bad. While marriages increased seven or eight percent, divorces have increased sixty-five to seventy per cent. The number of unmarried couples just living together has grown between one hundred fifty and two hundred per cent. At the same time, children living with both parents is down eighteen to twenty-five per cent. Those living with one parent is up over forty per cent, and most of the loss of one parent has been because of divorce.

Children Neglected in Teaching

Sixty to seventy per cent of children under five years of age spend part of the day in some care facility without spiritual and moral training, while over half of the mothers in America have left their homes to earn money outside the home. We even hear of two-year marriage contracts, suits of "palimony," (where one fornicator sues another fornicator after they have been committing fornication for a time, just living together).

The so-called "Women's Liberation Movement" and such organizations as the National Organization of Women, along with their push for the so-called Equal Rights Amendment, has been a major contributing factor to the disruption of society and the disintegration of the home. With over half of the black births in America being illegitimate, and the illegitimate birth rate among whites doubling in the past five years, it is not an unfair question to ask if a nation can survive while it makes such vicious attacks on the home and family, its basic structure. The evidence of disregard for what God says on such things is heavily turned toward a worse situation.

The home is a divine institution like the church. It is designed by God and began in Eden. It has divinely given purposes, goals, responsibilities and privileges. Good homes begin with good marriages of one man, one woman, until death separates them. It involves God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, the knowledge of duties and privileges as declared in God's Word. The prime goal of marriage and the home is to help one another get to heaven. When God is left out of these arrangements the home cannot be expected to be as it ought to be. When God is included and followed the home is one of

God's greatest blessings to mankind.

Sowing and Reaping

As with the church and nation, the law of sowing and reaping is relevant and because it cannot be repealed it gives us cause for real concern (Galatians 6:7,8). Downgrading the home and family is the result of sin and false doctrines designed to protect sinners. One gigantic factor on the increase is women leaving their domestic duties and the home and family for other pursuits. There has been a corresponding increase in adultery, lawlessness, and all manner of crimes, disregard for God and His church and general decay and corruption of morality. While this contention is not popular in our present society, it is still the truth and to shut our eyes to the truth is to sentence ourselves to a blindness that will destroy us. For the love of money, fame, pleasure and things, people have sold their families and homes, and not just their properties. Each woman who pursues employment outside the home at the neglect of her home should ask whether she does so from need or from greed.

We hear now and again someone say that the church is losing her young people. This is not entirely accurate. The losses of the young to the church are the result of homes losing the young. The church is unable, except in rare instances, to overcome what the home is doing to the young. The home is the training ground (Proverbs 22:6: Ephesians 6:4). We need parents like Abraham, Genesis 18:19, "*For I know him that he will command his children and his household and they shall keep the way of he Lord.*" Many parents are leaving the training of their children mostly to others and the result is the children receive little spiritual training. Their houses are not much more than filling stations occupied by strangers. Ability to communicate has been ruined by a worship at the altar of television. Priorities are being set by the godless even in the homes of those who profess Christ. Values are perverted because of what people are hearing and seeing.

Alcohol

Special mention is necessary on this theme because alcohol is probably the worst plague in our land. Did you know that drinking alcoholic beverages is producing more and more alcoholics and is America's number one drug problem? Did you also know that most young people learn that it is proper to drink from what they hear and see in the home more than any other influence? What fools parents are who drink! While the homes are beleaguered with runaway children, child abuse, abortions, incest, suicides and murders of children, still parents neglect the spiritual and moral training that is their God-assigned duty to provide their children.

So many children are allowed to reach physical maturity never having been taught self-discipline but tolerated in self-indulgence. The most frustrated people on earth are those who have to meet life but have never learned the difference between right and wrong, and do not know how to make the decisions they have to make. Many children learn disrespect for authority by being allowed to display disrespect for parental authority first. Proverbs 29:15, "*The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.*" Parental pursuit of selfish ambitions is at the root of many problems that are burying many youths. Far too many parents do not

provide the time, energy, patience, knowledge and guidance enough to rear their own children. They are too busy chasing, sometimes money, sometimes other people.

The sin attributed to Eli was that he did not restrain his children. Just how can a parent do a good job when he is too busy with lesser things to attend to children?

Divorce

Divorce is even occurring in the church at alarming rates. While it is still far less than in society generally (one of two in society), we find more and more professed “Christians” who show they really do not respect God’s laws governing marriage and the home. Even less do they respect His teaching regarding divorce and remarriage. To accommodate this growing sin in the church we are being bombarded with doctrines that rather appease those in sin than causing sinners to repent and correct. So many in the church have partaken of the sinful ways of the world that many preachers, teachers and elders have decided that we must “love them” and teach them something different from what God has said, or at least try to present some plausible dodge around what he has said so we can just go ahead and accept the adulterous unions among us.

Schools Often Hinder

Our schools have contributed to undermining the teaching done in godly homes, and even the erosion of the home itself. False doctrines about marriage, divorce, and remarriage among brethren have had a big push in recent years from professors in “our” schools. Even those in schools who know better and do not believe these errors being taught are not strong and courageous enough to openly oppose their colleagues. Jobs mean more than truth to so many.

Just what does one think the teaching of evolution does to the reliability of the Bible? Yet, evolution is taught as fact, even in schools supposedly operated by brethren. There are required texts that compromise with evolution. This is glaringly apparent in public schools, which in many matters have become one of the most poisonous enemies of the Lord's church in our day. They teach values and doctrines that are opposite to what God has revealed. Even homosexuality is presented as an acceptable lifestyle to small children. Humanism has become the loudest theme in public education.

Evidence Tells the Sad Story

The evidence of the decline of the home is staggering and it is obvious that the home has been going the wrong direction for several decades. While this is not pleasant to realize we might as well realize the truth about it. Sadly, too many do not really care.

Everything about the home is not bad. We should not conclude that all in America's homes have fallen to the devil. There are godly homes, governed by godly parents, rearing godly children. But this discussion has to do with present trend and downward spiral of the home, and the conclusions are too pronounced. But all homes do not produce divorce and delinquent children. It is because these homes respect God and His Word. This is why the task of taking the truth of God to the world is so pressing with respect to the quality and spiritual welfare of the occupants and inhabitants of our homes.

What Must Be Done?

It is one thing to recognize a trend but quite another to do something constructive about it and, in this case, turn it around to what it ought to be. There are efforts that should be made. Parents need to show their young what a godly home is. Often divorce breeds divorce. But stability breeds stability. Many youths never know a good home, marry without that knowledge, and when their home breaks down and out they consider that about normal. They expect failure because that is what they have experienced in their upbringing.

There should be more preparation for marriage by more teaching on God's will for the home and family. It is easier to prevent than to correct problems. Preparation for marriage is a great preventive.

Married people must sever all ties with whatever puts a strain on the stability of the marriage and home, whether it be associates, jobs, recreations, locations, etc. We should police the television. What comes over it most often in the name of entertainment is nothing but spiritual and moral garbage of hell with every sort of sin paraded as an acceptable bit of conduct including fornication, drunkenness, homosexuality, violence, hate, divorce, murder, etc. On an average day on the "soaps" viewers see and hear nearly seven instances of something sexually perverse. Great entertainment for people who want to please God!

Cannot we strengthen the homes and ties of marriage and the family by family worship, personal prayer, righteous activities together, attendance at worship, family reunions that stress godly heritage, learning and practicing the "Golden Rule"? The greatest gift a parent can give his child are principles and specifics that show the sanctity and uniqueness of a godly home where Christ reigns supreme.

Sometimes the question is asked of a parent whose children are noted for being what they ought to be, "What did you do that your sons or daughters are as they are?" It is generally conceded that providing a one, two, three-catalogued list is almost impossible. Good children are formed by living before them good lives. It is not so much one big thing as it is the daily little things combined. But we can say with confidence that teaching them a respect for the Bible is absolutely essential. Whatever advice could ever be given parents regarding their children is that human wisdom cannot displace or replace divine wisdom. As Edgar A. Guest once wrote, "It takes a heap o' living in a house to make it a home." Good homes produce good people and good churches. Good homes exist where each family member strives to live faithfully before God. Our homes can be what God approves if we will only listen and apply what He says.

Lost Children: A Terrible Tragedy

We often feel terribly helpless as we hear and read of the deterioration of homes, seeing children going astray, and watching the nation dig its own grave by ignoring the family and home. While none of us as individuals may ever make much impact on the world, even the nation, maybe even the community where we live, we can start now to make our homes more in keeping with the divine pattern.

Consider Noah, who saved his children from a world that was so degenerate God

destroyed it. Consider Hannah's Samuel's mother, who gave her child into the service of God. She did this even as the nation generally was going away from God.

Once a person asked me why anybody would want to bring children into this dismal and sinful world where things seemingly are going from bad to worse. I could only respond that we needed our children so we might train them God's way, and work and pray that they will keep the light of truth burning brightly in this darkened world in their own generation. We can provide for God tools for His service through our children if we will. May God help us, and them, in the midst of a present onslaught against His divine will to do what we must to make the salvation of ourselves, our children, and our children's children the eternal reality.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What can be expected when children are not taught?
2. How does the law of sowing and reaping apply to the home?
3. Do you consider the homes in America to be going the correct direction?
4. Give reasons for your answer to question four.
5. What are some evidences that many homes are going the wrong direction?
6. With whom does improvement have to start?

Why Are We Losing Our Children?

We properly make great efforts to take the gospel to the whole world. Many noble deeds and sacrifices are being made by many people in this effort. God will bless them for it! At the same time, while it is not true of all, many are losing their children. Even leaders in the church have suffered such losses. Compare the number of small children in Bible study with the number of young people in the teenage and young adult classes and you can see that somewhere along the line we have many “dropouts.” Faithful brethren who labor among the youth warn of the increasing apostasy among the young, the lack of genuine spirituality, a growing Biblical ignorance, disrespect for Biblical authority and either the inability or unwillingness to stand for the truth even when taught. Again, we want to say this is not an indictment of all. But it is true of many, even many who have been reared in what we consider Christian homes.

From what are they being lost? To what are they being lost? They are being lost from the church, truth and from efforts to restore New Testament Christianity in every generation. They are being lost to other religions, denominations, non-religion, anti-religion, atheistic and worldly pursuits. Many who are retained are lukewarm and indifferent. Some have estimated that as high as fifty per cent of our young people, “reared in the church,” are leaving. Some even say the rate is higher. What is being lost are precious souls. These are souls with good opportunity to go to heaven settling into a course of life that leads to hell.

Why is this drain taking place? Can we plug it before others go that way? Some years ago I spent several months inquiring, reading, interviewing, questioning young people, parents, teachers, anyone who has much to do with the spiritual life of the young, seeking answers to this problem. An analysis of my findings show there are a number of factors that are contributing to the loss of our young.

It Starts in the Home

Basically, the attitude and action of the home dominates the scene. The fault lies there more than any other place. We like to blame everybody and everything other than where the blame really lies. There is no profit in that approach. The home is not the sole cause, but it is probably the prime cause of the loss of the young. We need to take this medicine and do something about it. Parents cannot “play church,” putting other things first, and then expect their young to put God first. It seldom happens. Parents have failed so often to teach by word and example what a Christian should be.

God placed the prime responsibility of spiritual training of a child on parents (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4, Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 11:19). We need to study, not just passively read, these verses. The first business of every parent is to see to it that the child knows God and his duty to God.

Parents display such attitudes that are sickening and disgusting. “They are young only once. Let them have their fun and good times.” We need to learn that no time is a

good time that does not put God first. To indulge the young is detrimental to them. They become ill-equipped to meet their sacred duties. This attitude implies that it is unpleasant to serve God. It is just a deprivation. It suggests that there is plenty of time someday to learn about God. To say they are young only once suggests that possibly God does not know that. Yet, God says, Ecclesiastes 12:1, *“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.”*

What Do You Expect?

Can we rear a child fifteen or so years in the atmosphere where God, the church, truth, Christianity and morality are secondary to school, games, television, pleasure, movies, etc. and expect them to be grounded in first things first? Children are taught at home what is of prime importance.

Can we allow children to pursue social interests, conform to the crowd, seek popularity, engage in unchristian recreation, lasciviousness behavior, filling their minds with the moral trash produced by the degenerate minds of the movie, magazine and television industries and then expect them to love the pure, noble, moral and clean things of life?

Can we hold out to them the idea that “success” is financial success, acceptance, worldly recognition, and expect them to follow the Christ who never sought such things?

Too many parents have neglected to teach and demonstrate in their own lives the loyalty God expects from a Christian. Yet, somehow, they think their children will seek what is good above all else. Yes, the problem of losing our young is first and foremost, above all else, a reflection of the home.

Other Situations

Some young people are lost when they enter into circumstances that discourage Christianity. Sometimes it may be unavoidable such as when they might be forced from home into the armed forces. The trials are hard and they need every encouragement and prayer. Many are lost, or at least show their lack of concern for Christ, during the years when they seek higher formal education at colleges and universities where God and His will are considered irrelevant and stupid. Take a young boy or girl out of high school and sit him at the feet of some "wise" scoffer and mocker who take shots at God all the time, teaching infidelity as if he knew everything, it certainly has a detrimental effect on many youths. They hear the truth ridiculed and they do not know enough truth to resist the error, nor are they in a position to be able to defend it even if they were informed. The devil has many of his servants in the chairs of learning in our educational systems.

A Major Drain

Others are lost by disregarding the Lord’s teaching regarding marriage. They marry outside the church and are further drawn away from the truth. They ignore God’s laws on marriage and divorce (too often having been led astray by false teachers in the church regarding this subject), and once finding themselves in a bad circumstance, they remain there rather than please God and repent of their sinful state and come out of it. Often young people are subjected to a divided home religiously or where one or both

parents are indifferent toward God. This has destroyed the faith that could and should have been nurtured.

Still others become the victims of those who constantly berate the Lord's church, criticize it, belittle it and reduce it to nothing more than a denomination among denominations that needs restructuring. These liberal, lying, "new lights" often speak of the church as being out-of-date, answering questions nobody is asking, lacking love, full of tradition, hypocritical, stagnant, etc. How can any person constantly hear that Satanic barrage and have respect for the church? They lose interest when they are convinced of such harangue. Such critics often cater to, adopt and admire the message and methods of denominations. They like to impress the young with their sensationalism, emotionalism, promotionalism, "Jive talk," unorthodox dress and conduct. They create and then exploit what they call the "generation gap," and wean the young away from the wise counsel of faithful parents, godly elders and sound gospel preachers. They call for an abandonment of the past, whatever it was, and adoption of the "new" even if it is not true.

Negligent Older People

Parents and church leaders and teachers too often sit idly by, complacent, gullible, naive, even cooperating with such things, and uproot the sound and religious heritage our young deserve. That heritage includes faith in God, love for family, love for the church of the Bible, the sanctity of the home, conformity to God's standards of morality. Too many young are being served huge helpings of modernism, immorality, compromise, permissiveness, foul speech, Marxism, anarchy, rebellion, "down with everything, and up with nothing." The "do your own thing" attitude has captured the souls of many, and this "go along to get along" sickness that is often evident among some older people has taken many of the young away from God.

These critics of God's way are sometimes politicians whose personal lives are in shambles, educators who worship at the altar of their own wisdom, the social gospel clergymen who do not have much regard for the soul of man or his eternal destiny. Some act more like brotherhood "fun and games" directors who are called "youth ministers," who think it is the work of the church to provide playgrounds, gymnasiums, pleasure trips, etc., and put their emphasis there. Many "youth seminars" have been little more than sessions to convince the youth that the elderships, gospel preachers and parents who hold to the Word of God are "irrelevant." Too many youth leaders impose the adventuresome, inquisitive spirit of youth to exploring paths that have repeatedly proven digressive. The efforts of godly and determined Christian parents have no more deadly enemy among the young than these flighty, flippant, "cute," know-it-all youth workers who constantly ape liberal digressives and degrade the Lord's church and ridicule the nobility of the past.

The church has a role regarding parents and youth. It is the same role that it sustains to all people, young and old. It is not to assume the work of the parents and home, providing recreation, secular education, etc. It ought not coddle and condone sins regardless of who is involved. Rather than thinking the answer lies with singles classes, single again classes, youth seminars where brainwashing goes on, week-end retreats that take the young away from Lord's Day congregational worship in favor of "lakeside worship," the church has the God-given task of preaching and teaching the same saving gospel to everyone. To "*preach the word*" by reproving, rebuking, and exhorting is the

work of the church. Ignorance of the Word of God and the lack of respect for it is at the heart and base of the loss of young people. It would be better to study the Word rather than engage in “problem solving” where participants share ignorance. The church deserves the full support and cooperation by every home in assisting in such efforts.

Did You Ever Consider This?

We must add that parents have a duty to other parents. It is sinful to place stumbling blocks before young people. Parents and their young are responsible for their influence. It is not merely “my own business” what my young people do, where they go, how they dress, what they are allowed to do. Inasmuch as young people influence one another, and peer pressure is heavy, parents have the responsibility to see to it that their young set a good example. It is not unheard that young people who are trying to do right, and parents who are trying to train them right, meet with the most aggravating opposition from other “Christian” parents and young people who are content to follow the world. We have heard it said, “It’s nobody’s business but ours if my children attend the dance.” That is as false as a three-dollar bill. Every member of the church, parent, child, elderships, preachers and all are effected, or should I say infected, adversely. We need to ask if the influence of our home is contributing to the cause of Christ and encouraging Christlike conduct, or is it as often as not like the influence of the sinful world.

Every young person is a gift from God. None can be lost without it being an eternal loss. Experience warns that many do fall away. Let us resolve that we shall make that number as small as possible. Teach the young, show the young, what being a Christian really is. Follow the teaching of the Bible, not the ways of the world. Show them how to resist the influences that are evil when they cannot avoid them. But many of these influences can be avoided with parental concern, teaching and guidance.

There is not one young person we can afford to lose. Are you really willing for your son or daughter to go to hell? Certainly, you are not. Just how studious and diligent are your efforts at home and in the local church to see to it that they follow Christ?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. From what, and to what, are we losing our children?
2. Where can the correction of this drain be best executed?
3. Discuss the expectation of children to be faithful without the proper example set before them.
4. How important is the teaching regarding marriage?
5. What is the role of the home and the church in preventing the loss of our children?
6. How great is the spiritual loss of a child?
7. Name some influences that contribute to losing our children.

Why Marriages Fail

When we have a physical disease we have to apply the medicine. We have a serious social and religious disease in our land, and it reflects the loss of respect for the sanctity of the home. The divorce rate increases with each passing year. It has reached epidemic proportions that it now threatens the whole social structure. It has become respectable to be divorced, to commit adultery or to “have an affair.” People of prominence in government, entertainment, sports, every field, are among those whose marriages have failed. Even in religion it has lost its stigma. Among some in the Lord’s church divorce is no longer considered shameful, but a wise choice of alternatives. We suggest that marriage failures reflect failures somewhere else. To be sure, marriage failure has been the cause of numerous social, psychological, financial, mental and spiritual problems. But just as it is a cause of many problems, it is also the result of other problems that lie behind the failure. We want to consider some of the major causes of marital destruction.

Marriage is of Divine Origin

One cause, possibly the most prominent, is the failure to recognize the institution of marriage as a divine institution. Marriage is not just the result of social evolution and merely a social structure. It is not just a legal arrangement between people. It is not simply for the satisfaction of the sexual desire. It is more than just a custom among nations. It is not merely for the propagation of the human race. It is a divinely given institution, having come from the mind of God, designed by God, given for specific purposes as God intended. Like the church, it came from the Lord and is to be governed as the Lord has designed it. Specifications and regulations for the home and marriage have been revealed by God. It had its beginning in God’s mind.

“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:18-25).

Any disposition of marriage that leaves out God, His will, His intent and His design, is a perversion of an institution of divine origin. Marriages between people who do not respect this fact are in a relationship no stronger than the human beings involved. Marriage is more than a covenant between mates. It is a covenant with God.

Marriage is Monogamous

Failure in marriage often results because man has perverted God's design that marriage be one man for one woman. Monogamy is God's pattern. This is to be a relationship between one man and one woman who become husband and wife for so long as both of them are alive.

"The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them. Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:3-9).

"Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man"

(Rom. 7:1-3).

"Till death do you part" is not just a phrase in a ceremony. It is a very accurate description of what marriage involves. The only honorable way for a marriage to terminate is the death of one of the mates. Yes, there is another way that God allows; divorce because of fornication, but that involves sin. Multi-marriages may be popular and accepted by society generally. But God does not approve of it. Those living with new mates whose first marriages were terminated dishonorably are living in adultery, unless the divorce was for the one cause God allows.

There Must Be Love

Marriages fail because there is the lack of love. Love is the only proper foundation upon which to enter marriage.

"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ

and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:24-33).

This passage teaches about Christ and the church. But it also teaches about husbands and wives. How much did Christ love the church? Just that much is the husband to love his wife. How much is the church to be subject to Christ and submit to Him? Just that much is expected of the wife to the husband. Christ died for the church. While some marry for social standing, security, physical attraction, vain and foolish reasons, the Lord intends that marriages be built on love one for the other. When that is missing the marriage will likely collapse and the people involved will be scarred for life, possibly eternity.

Lack of Preparation

Marriages are failing because those entering marriage are not trained to understand it. There is so little genuine preparation for marriage. We train our children for many things but often omit some of the most important matters. We would not allow them to drive an automobile without training, yet we allow them to get married without giving them what they need for success. They train for sports and occupations, but not in the art of making a good home. It is harder to get a driver's license than a marriage license.

The responsibility for this training is first the home and the parents. The church must be active in teaching the truth of God regarding marriage and the home. The home, however, is the most influential training school.

The young must be taught the responsibilities as well as the privileges in marriage. So many are so immature toward duties they must assume in marriage. They must be shown their opportunities, the spiritual significance of this relationship, the holiness and sanctity of marriage. They must be taught the permanency of marriage. The physical relationships and the purity of it must be taught. They need to be warned of the manifold pitfalls. They must be aware of problem areas like finances, the sore trouble when there are mixed religions, potential in-law problems, the necessity of loyalty to each other. "Leave and cleave" is a theme that cannot be over-emphasized. So many problems that cause marriage to fail could be avoided with proper pre-marital training.

Keep Thyself Pure

How important it is to teach the young to enter marriage undefiled sexually, to be pure and to save oneself for one's lifetime mate. Pre-marital sex, entered into for pleasure, is often the source of great hardship and divorce, as well as shame, disgrace, distrust and sacrifice of morality. Training before marriage is far better than trying to correct problems after marriage has begun. There will be problems enough even after training. But so many marriages could have been spared divorce if forethought had been given.

Leave and Cleave

Many marriages fail because of interference from outsiders. Often these outsiders are mother-in-law or father-in-law who just will not allow the young to marry and

become their own. Either the young are not willing to cut from the parents or the parents are not content to let the young govern their own affairs. Meddling in the affairs of the home of your children when you are not asked is to ask for trouble. Parents should always be willing to help and give advice when it is asked. But unless it is a matter of life and death, parents should stay out of the family affairs of their children. It brings estrangement and in-law trouble. The only real solution to in-law trouble is distance.

People ought not marry until they can stand on their own feet. If the training of children has not given them sufficient background and backbone prior to marriage, then after they are married you have two with which to deal and that won't work. "Leave and cleave" is one of the most needed lessons in teaching about marriage.

It is hard for a son or daughter to go against parents, even when it calls for them to side with their mate. Parents ought not put children in that situation. Children need to learn that when they marry their first loyalty is to his or her mate and parents a distant second. Young couples may not do everything and handle everything the wisest and certainly not always to the liking of parents. But do they have to? Is there anything that says they must follow where the parents went in every case? Both young and old need to learn that there is a difference between helping and interfering, and we all need to discover just where one ends and the other begins.

But in-law trouble cannot separate a married couple when they lean on each other and put each other first. No outsider from any source can harm their marriage when they trust each other, stand by each other and pull for one another.

One in Christ

Marriages fail because those involved did not think soberly about their religious faith. Some get married without even discussing the matter. We have never read of any religious group that encourages mixed religious marriages. Everyone knows the problems that are caused. There is lacking that common ground upon which to make decisions, settle disputes and establish priorities. That which ought be the dearest to your heart, your service to God, cannot even be properly shared with the one who is supposed to be dearest to you on earth. Most of the problems that arise in the church come from homes where religious division exists. Compromise is so often the result. Children grow up not knowing what to believe. Many children have no faith at all because they have grown up in a divided home and they have decided that religion is just a source of trouble rather than the peace God intended.

So many who marry one who is not a member of the church eventually abandon their faith, leave the church, and maybe join some human denomination just to keep peace in the family. They sacrifice their convictions for their mate and thereby lose their own soul.

It is useless for someone to cry out, "I married a non-Christian and it worked out because he or she became a Christian." Just be thankful that it worked that way with you, but think of the many, many times it goes the other way. Think of the unhappiness and incompleteness that exists in many homes, where there is no divorce, but there is lacking that solid and firm base upon which the family is supposed to be built.

The Prime Goal of Marriage

Marriages have a one primary purpose; helping each other get to heaven. How can one who refuses to obey the gospel help a Christian get to heaven? It is futile to deny the heartache that accompanies mixed marriages. It is equally futile to deny the disastrous spiritual consequences that result so many times from mixed religious marriages. If two people who propose to spend their lives together cannot take time to discuss the most important matter of life, the Lord Jesus Christ, and come to an agreement regarding their service to Him, they have no business getting married.

Wanted: Good Examples

Marriages sometimes fail because those involved have never had a good marriage set before them. They do not know what a good marriage is supposed to be. Their home when they were growing up was not as it ought to have been. There was strife, separations, divorce and all they know of home is a tug-of-war.

When they get married they think that this strife is what is expected in the home. They have never seen real consideration for others demonstrated. It ought to be the goal of every father and mother to present before their children a marriage where the children can see what marriage and the home should be. Homes will have problems and problems can be met and overcome when the husband and wife want them to be overcome. They will work at it until they are overcome.

Marriages can be successful; many are. There are many ways to fail without getting a divorce. But success in marriage does not just happen. Failure does not just happen either. When both mates work hard for success the likelihood is that there will be joy in the home. We should try to avoid these things that provoke marriages to fail.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are the characteristics of marriage as God designed it?
2. Can we expect success if we leave God out of our marriage?
3. What does love really mean and how does it demonstrate itself?
4. How can one prepare for marriage?
5. What do you consider the prime goal in marriage?
6. How many factors can you list that contribute to marital failure?

Why Marriages Succeed

Our nation has a very unenviable divorce rate, presently about one out of two marriages ending in divorce. This is cause for alarm not only among those who respect the will of God but also for economists, historians, psychologists, law enforcement agencies, educators and others who are concerned for the welfare of the future of our nation. The disintegration of the home cannot be denied. Furthermore, there are rabid and active opponents working for the total destruction of the home as we know it and have learned from the Bible.

There are many reasons why marriages fail and these deserve study. But we can learn all the reasons for failure and still not know why marriages succeed. In an all-inclusive statement we can say that marriages succeed because a man and a woman who love one another and decide to live together in marriage listen to God

There is much in Scripture pertaining to marriage, the home, husbands, wives and the rearing of children. Those who succeed obey the voice of God. Let us consider a few areas where they listen to Him.

Purposes

Husbands and wives listen to God when He tells them that marriage is a divine institution with spiritual purposes (Genesis 2:18,22). Marriage came from the mind of God as did the church. It is more than a social, legal and economic contract. Instituted by God, it is for the good of mankind (Genesis 2:18).

One of the primary purposes of marriage is to provide companionship, helpfulness and procreation. It is also to avoid fornication. Marriage is a relationship which is designed where one helps the other to please God in life and to go to heaven when this life is over. In marriage we are not dealing with just men, women, society, civil laws, etc. We are concerned with the souls of people. Any disposition of marriage must include God who originated it. Marriages are more likely to succeed when the spiritual side of it is respected.

Adults

Marriages succeed when the husband and wife listen to God when He tells them that marriage is for adults. The divorce rate among those who marry in their teen years is four times higher than the deplorable national average. God said, "*Let a MAN (emphasis, JWB) leave his father and mother.*" Marriage is not child's play. It requires more than physical maturity. There must be a reasonable degree of emotional, mental and spiritual maturity to handle the duties and privileges of marriage.

We sometimes hear people blame marriage failure on incompatibility. More often than not it is irresponsibility due to immaturity. It is a case where "children" have attempted to assume an adult role. In addition to marrying too early in life we also see the danger of brief courtships that do not allow for the discovery of the levels of maturity. One mate may say to another, "You do not seem to be the same person I married." If they married very young you can be sure after a very few years they will not be the same

people because they married while they were still growing up. They should wait until they are grown.

Oneness

Successful marriages are enjoyed when husband and wife listen to God as He teaches the oneness of marriage. “*The two become one flesh.*” There is to be the leaving of parents and the cleaving to each other. There is to be unity and oneness in handling the finances of the home. There is to be unity in the matter of faith. There is to be loyalty to one’s mate above everyone else except Deity. No in-law or outlaw can drive a wedge between a husband and wife who are loyal first to each other. The reason others can sometimes contribute to splitting a marriage is because the married ones are not united as they should be. In marriage it is no longer me-my-mine, you-yours. Everything becomes we-us-ours. Unless we listen to God in this respect we invite trouble. Even blessed children should not be allowed to divide husband and wife.

Love

Marriages succeed when husbands and wives listen to God when He teaches there must be love in the home. Love is seeking the other’s highest good. Wives are to love their husbands and husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Too often people think of love only in terms of sexual relationships. This is involved in marriage and is an expression of love that God reserves for the husband and wife. Sexual relationships outside of the bond of marriage are sinful whether it be before marriage or after marriage. How can there be the trust, mutual respect, esteem and admiration one for the other when such unfaithfulness to the vows of marriage are in evidence? How can there be the holding up of each other’s hands as is necessary in marriage when there is betrayal?

Two major complaints made by wives and husbands are: (1) she nags and belittles; (2) and he constantly criticizes and finds fault. Such is simply a manifestation of the lack of love. Love will unselfishly seek what God has decreed to be for the good of the other. Certainly we are not to be totally blind to the faults of the other. But the motive behind noting the faults is all important. Is it to hurt, ridicule, degrade and harm, or is it to help the other improve and overcome fault? We need the insight of each other but we do not need the barrage of criticism designed to humiliate and destroy. Furthermore, marriage partners need to be considerate in choosing the time to mention faults and shortcomings. Some have done it so openly and publicly to the hurt and embarrassment of the other that it scars. This is not a manifestation of genuine love.

Sexual Relationship

Marriages succeed when people listen to God regarding the sexual association in marriage. First Peter 3:7 and First Corinthians 7:2-5 gives us the divine mind in this realm. One purpose of marriage is to provide for the satisfaction of the sexual appetite. In marriage it is a relationship that is sacred, pure, holy and undefiled. Outside of marriage it is a degenerate behavior that reduces people to the level of animals. There is no way for even this sophisticated and permissive society of today to so glamorize sin as to make it

acceptable before God and before those who love God.

Though there be many similarities between husband and wife, there are also tremendous differences and these differences must be respected. There are differences other than physical differences. God made us so as to complement each other. The bodily association must include the greatest respect for the body of each other. The body is the temple of God (First Corinthians 3:16). Your body belongs to your mate and vice versa. Yet, each body deserves the utmost care and kindness. The sexual relation in marriage is not merely an animalistic craving being satisfied. It is, as already stated, an added language of love.

Many enter marriage without understanding the functions of the body. This can be learned without carnality and sinfulness. The duty of parents is to see to it that their children know the sacredness of the body, its function, and how God intends its use. Young people ought not have to learn such things from the alley, restroom walls, filthy language of peers or through fornication. Explicit and reverent material is available to assist parents in the discharge of this duty.

Unselfishness

Marriages will more likely succeed when partners listen to God and apply the Christian virtue of selflessness. Selfishness is often at the tap root of marital problems. When we see husbands loving their wives as Christ loved the church, and wives loving their husbands in return as the church is to love Christ, there is the basis for a happy home. But the disposition to have “my way” and seek only what “I want” will soon destroy a marriage.

God teaches that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23). This does not contend that the husband is superior and the wife inferior. Each is superior in his or her role and realm. Each becomes misplaced outside that realm. There is no room for a tyrannical husband or a domineering wife. In both instances that only brews marital strife. Selfishness makes marriages unhappy. Selflessness contributes to a successful marriage.

Duration

Marriages are more likely to succeed when both listen to God when He teaches that marriage is for life, “till death do us part,” in sickness and health, prosperity and adversity, for better or worse, good times, bad times, all times. Marriage partners must enter marriage with that understanding and intent. Anything less is to distort what God has implanted. It has been that way since the beginning, Jesus said in Matthew 19:8. This idea of trial marriages is an abomination to every nation.

In conclusion, as goes the home, so goes the nation, society generally, even the church. The home is the basic unit of society. From the home comes the population of everything. The stream cannot rise above the fountain from which it flows. Those in marriage and those contemplating marriage must learn these things and keep them in mind throughout marriage. Such doctrine from Deity is indispensable for a successful marriage. God’s richest blessings will abide with those who will listen to Him and heed His Word.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What basic reasons would you offer as to why marriages are successful?
2. How much does unselfishness count in marriage?
3. What are some acceptable ways to teach the young about the sexual relationship?
4. Discuss: Marriage is for adults.

Christine Ward Hale

1897 - 1988

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”

Psalm 111:15

We have come to this hour because of the death of another loved one. Although we are choked with sadness, and that because of the finality of our association together here on earth, as it is with God, there is a preciousness about it with us also. The preciousness of this hour was made possible by the one we honor and to whom we pay respect.

Her name was Christian Ward Hale. She was also known by several other affectionate names, such as, sister Hale, Christine, Tina, Mother, Attie, and since the coming of her grandchildren, “Big Ma.”

“Big Ma” was born March 3, 1897, having then lived over ninety-one years of age, death coming on April 20, 1988. Her life literally spanned one of the most momentous periods of human history, going from the days of the horse and buggy to men walking upon the moon. But we need to be reminded that some of the more important events that transpire on this earth do not make headlines in newspapers, nor will be included in paragraphs of history books. We would insist that her life is far more enduring than such things of the material ventures over which people marvel. She lived her life vigorously, energetically, doing what she did with all her might. Most important of all, she lived her life righteously.

She was born to humble, yet, genuinely refined and godly parents, Dr. and Mrs. J. S. Ward. Uniquely, she attended only one school, Nashville Bible School, that came to be David Lipscomb College, beginning in the first grade and continuing until she obtained the Bachelor of Literary Arts degree.

On October 24, 1908, at the age of eleven, she was baptized into Christ by E. A. Elam in an outdoor baptismal pool between the present Harding Hall and the first Avalon Hall. She was also married in Harding Hall to Clyde Hale in 1925. Much of her life centered around the school to which her father was so attached and where he labored many years.

Her life made a difference, not only to those who lived alongside of her, but to generations that follow after, and will favorably affect those yet to be born if time continues. We wish to talk about her life and those areas of her life where she excelled. Every word is intended as a tribute to her.

A Friend

“Big Ma” excelled as a friend. She was known for her hospitality, ever serving as a gracious hostess, building her own self-esteem through service to others, opening her home to others even when inconvenient to herself. She was capable of establishing and maintaining longtime friendships. Bennie Lou Reynolds of Atlanta, who has preceded her in death, spoke after sixty years of acquaintance that Christine was the best friend she ever had. Even as her memory faded where she did not recognize her own children, within recent years she readily recognized a childhood friend, Eunice Hammond, and a loyal and beloved cousin, Evelyn Jordan.

A Grandmother

“Big Ma” took great pride in her grandchildren beginning with her only granddaughter, Amy, and continuing with her five grandsons, Bill, Stephen, Ward, Mark, and Sam. It is fitting that these fine young men, along with Amy’s husband, Lowell Hagewood, will serve as her pallbearers today.

Each of these grandchildren took advantage of opportunities to do for her in their special way as needs arose, especially during her last years of infirmity. “Big Ma” earned, and she received, their love, honor and respect.

A Sister

How lovingly and proud she would speak of “my sister and brother,” almost as if nobody else had a brother or sister. She held such love for Robbie and Truman, and their mates, Charles and Mary. She deeply loved their children, the Brewer boys, Neika, and Jimmy Ward. She was known by these nieces and nephews as “Attie.”

A Daughter

She rendered love and service to her Mother and Papa. As a young woman she cared for her mother during times of her mother’s illness. She was a companion with her father as they traveled together across the state when he lectured on bee keeping, going to and from his preaching appointments, meeting him upon returning home from work at Life and Casualty Insurance Company where he served as medical director. One of her favorite expressions was, “Papa can fix it.” To her there was nothing her father could not do. Singularly, each year on her own birthday she sent a gift to her mother. She cared for them until death separated them.

A Wife

Christine gave devotion, love, service, companionship and support to her Clyde. She served as his co-worker in the Lord’s vineyard. She often spoke of his handsome looks, keeping him neatly dressed for his work. She proved to be a genuine help meet and suitable for him.

In her younger years she was strong and active, unselfishly giving understanding, recognized to be the “power behind the throne,” sharing good years and lean years,

standing side by side in the joys as well as the hardships as a faithful wife to a faithful gospel preacher for over fifty years. Her husband did, indeed, as is stated of the worthy woman in Proverbs 31, praise her as a worthy woman.

A Mother

In this relationship she may have excelled above others already mentioned. Unselfishly she worked hard and sacrificed willingly on behalf of her two daughters, Ann and Rosalyn. She was a keeper of the home, preparing meals, entertaining, sewing, keeping her yard with beautiful flowers she planted herself. Such are the memories her children cherish about her.

She provided a home where love reigned, good examples were set, standards were planted and dignity prevailed. In her role as mother she knew what mattered and she kept her priorities in order.

A Christian

She was faithful in worship, giving in service, a teacher of children in Sunday School in her earlier days, working in putting out the church bulletin, sitting with the ill, comforting the bereaved, offering words of optimism and encouragement to all round her, sharing her optimism and resolution. She steadfastly upheld the hands of her husband as he preached the gospel of Christ.

We suggest she excelled in the other areas of life because she was such a faithful Christian. She let the way of Christ be the guiding light of her life.

When most of her memory was gone, and physically she was barely able to be taken to the hour of worship, she could still sing from memory the songs of praise and worship that she had sung since childhood. She was fortunate to have been schooled under such preachers of the gospel as Lipscomb, Elam, Sewell, Harding, and she held N. B. Hardeman as one of the best. These were men who were preacher friends of her husband and father; men of unwavering courage, faithfulness, uncompromising of truth, who preached soundly from a thorough knowledge of God's Book.

Home

So imbedded in her mind was her loyalty to worshipping God, even as life slipped away she would, when restless, often speak of the need to go to church. Dominant among the words that came to be the last ones she could speak that we could understand were Mother, Papa, school, home, and church. It may well have been characteristic of the difficulty she suffered that she would recall such things. But the point we do not want to miss is that these things impressed her the most. They were the last portions of thought to pass from her.

We shall ever remember "Big Ma" most impressively as one who loved the church, family, school and home. She loved her home with Mother and Papa, Robbie and

Truman, on Caldwell Lane. She loved her home with Clyde and her daughters on Graybar Lane. It was because of her love for the place she called home that she remained in her little log house so long, possibly even longer than ordinarily thought to be expedient. But we all knew of her love for home. It was a sad and difficult day, a day long dreaded before it came, when it was necessary to take her from her home, and only then because it was essential for her own welfare.

During her last years, when she was mentally and physically drifting away, years that proved to be a long good-bye, she was attentively cared for by Ann Dearing and grandchildren, until finally other arrangements had to be made. Her closing years were with Rosalyn when she received constant love and care to the last. She died with her daughter holding her hand, finally passing away in quietness after days of struggle, in a place and in a room that she, knowing little else, came to call home.

She always had a desire to be at home, which she considered her palace and heaven on earth. Therefore we come to the inescapable hour with hope, confidence, understandable sadness but with joy for her release, that she is now and eternally with God at home.

Charles R. Brewer was a man of many talents, not the least of which was being a masterful poet. He once wrote lines to a poem called *Curtain Call* that seem so fitting for this time.

Sooner or later
The time comes to all,
Life's drama ended,
The curtain must fall.

May the Master then say,
With His hand on your brow,
"You've played your part well,
You may go home now."

(Following these words, Buddy Arnold sang the beautiful song, "*Going Home*," after which appropriate and affectionate remarks were spoken by her nephew, Schuman Brewer. Funeral Services were at the Roech-Patton Funeral Home in Nashville, interment in Woodlawn Cemetery, where her body was laid beside that of her beloved husband, Clyde, and in the same plot of other loved ones who had gone before her.) JWB