

The Christian Home

by Paul L. Freeman



The greatest need in the church today is for a revival of solid Bible teaching on the Christian Home. The home is where the next generation of Christians is being molded. Pastors and Youth leaders will agree that the best Christian young people in the local church usually come from strong Christian homes. They will also acknowledge that the biggest hindrance to spirituality in the life of a young person is the influence of a poor Christian home. It is a Biblical principle that "like produces like". This volume is sent forth with the sincere desire and earnest prayer that God will use it to help others establish a Christian home based upon the Word of God. The future of your children is at stake and Satan would love to have them. The best book on the Christian home is the Word of God.

What is a Christian Home?

1. A husband and wife who are Christians.

We will begin by assuming both are saved. The problem of an unsaved mate will be discussed later. There can be no Christian home until a man and woman have recited marriage vows and are legally married. A common-law cohabitation, or a trial marriage, which does not bind one to another cannot constitute a Christian home. The Bible calls this fornication and clearly condemns it, "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" (I Cor. 7:1, 2).

The Bible says that God put Adam to sleep, removed one of his ribs, and from that rib made a woman to be Adam's "helpmeet" (Gen. 2:18-25). God made them to become "one flesh". When this union takes place it is understood that two single people have laid aside their independence in order to mutually serve one another. The capacity in which they will serve is carefully marked out by God in the Bible. Failure to follow His instruction will bring grief and sorrow further down the road. The pathway of blessing is always the pathway of obedience. The Apostle Paul tells us that marriage is a beautiful picture of the relationship that exists between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:25-32). We should be careful not to blur the picture, but to be a good testimony for the Lord. Marriage is to last until death or until the Lord Jesus comes for His church.

2. A father and mother who have borne or adopted children.

The Bible says that "children are an heritage of the LORD" and "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Psalm 127:3-5). God has put within the heart of women the desire to have children. Read about Rachel, Hannah, Sarah, and Elizabeth in the Word of God. Children are a tie that helps to bind the marriage and hold it together. We realize there are some Christian couples who have not been able to have children. Couples who are childless might consider the blessing of adopting children. God's plan is to keep the wife in the home. When God came to see His friend Abraham, He said, "Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent." In I Timothy 5:14 we read, "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."

Then in Titus 2:5 we find that the young women are to be taught by the older women "to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home (this means a guard of the dwelling or a stayer at home), good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed." The temptation to seek employment outside the home is removed when children are present. One of the greatest opportunities is to be a mother and a homemaker. Mother and Dad both experience a growth in character that is not quite the same without raising children. Children in the home present a glorious opportunity to add to the number of the redeemed and to train a Christian for the Lord's work. (II Timothy 1:2-5 and III John 4).

3. It is a place where ONE family lives.

Our Lord teaches us that when we marry, we must leave father and mother. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife" (Mark 10:7). Living with relatives will greatly hinder the happiness and effectiveness of the Christian home. The home is intended by God to be a complete, harmonious unit. Relatives or non-relatives abiding in the same home cause friction, and hinder natural expressions within the family unit. Many couples endeavor to go contrary to the Word of God for what they are sure are good reasons. It does not usually take long to discover that they have erred. Many times the situation cannot be readily corrected and the irritation will go on for years.

4. It is the place where all the family members eagerly return.

Real Christians are citizens of Heaven living in a hostile world (Phil. 3:20 and John 15:18, 19). It is a blessing to be able to return home to those who love Christ. The home is where we find spiritual agreement

and purpose. Here is where we build Christian character and teach sound doctrine within the privacy of the family unit. Here is where love begins, kindness is shown, and loyalty is instilled. Our children should not be often absent from the home because they are at Jimmie's house or Mary's house. They should be taught to spend their spare time at their own house. We need to remember that, "be it ever so humble, there is no place like home."

5. It is the place where we mold our children.

The Bible tells us to "Train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6). From the time they are born, we should hold them and love them. We should teach them early to believe in Christ as their Saviour. Obedience and discipline cannot be required too soon. Children should be patterned in the image of Mom and Dad, who also are following Christ, and seeking to be conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29). Praise God when people say that your children are a "chip off the old block." If you are following Christ in godly living, it is indeed a welcome compliment.

There is no closer or lengthier relationship in life than the home. This is where we eat, sleep, and spend our free time. It is safe to say that a child will spend 6,570 days in the home. What we believe and practice will be his or her belief and practice. What we disbelieve and fail to practice will be his or her disbeliefs and failed practices (Matt. 7:24-29). We need to pray much that we might lead consistent Christian lives before our children, lest we cause them to stumble (Romans 14:13).

We ought to have Christians at our home often for spiritual fellowship, "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2:46). They are good examples for our children. It is always encouraging to our children, when they see there are other people who believe like Mom and Dad. The ungodly and the Christ-rejecting cannot enter the home to corrupt it. It is also true that, if we will not invite certain people into our home because of foul language or immodest dress, we ought to see that the same does not come into our home by way of the television.

6. It is not the church.

Though it is expected that we should attend the services of the church and be involved in witnessing, the church should not become our everyday home. Children should not be left alone at home while Mom and Dad are at church. Some parents think they can spend all their time at the church "serving the Lord", and God will take care of their

children. That is not supported by the Word of God nor by actual experience. They will learn when it is too late, that they have neglected their precious children. Too many church activities can take the children away from the home and deprive them of the molding that only Mom and Dad can accomplish. It is unnatural for your children to be gone from the home constantly; they should spend most of their time with you.

There needs to be a sensible balance maintained between the home and the church. God ordained the home before He ordained the local church.

How is the Christian home organized?

1. The position and responsibility of the husband and father.

A. The husband is the head of the home.

In the first home, God spoke to the woman regarding her husband, "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16). In the New Testament we read, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23). The husband stands in the home as Christ stands to the church. God says the man is the head and the ruler. He is to have the pre-eminence and respect. His will is to be done and his mind is to be sought. Our best Bible example is found in I Peter 3:5,6 where we read, "For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." His leadership is without question, the plan of God.

B. He is the provider for the family.

It is the responsibility of the husband to shelter, feed, clothe, and educate the family. The Bible says, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worth than an infidel" (I Tim. 5:8). He is to work day and night, if need be, to accomplish this end. If he cannot earn enough at his job, he should look for a better job, or get an additional part time job. God told Adam, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3:19). Sometimes the life style has to be trimmed. It is amazing how you can stretch your money if you have to. The family has to learn to live within its means.

C. Dad is the leader in discipline.

There is a crying need today in Christian homes for the father to apply the "board of education" to the "seat of learning." God has told us, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Proverbs 13:24). Again we read, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Proverbs 19:18). Again God says. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child: but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Proverbs 22:15). A wise father will pay attention to God when He says, "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). Eli lost his sons because he refused to discipline, "because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (I Samuel 3:13).

The father should insist on obedience and respect for Mom and Dad. None of his children should ever "mouth off" to Mom and Dad. A good solid spanking on the thick part of the anatomy in the rear is best. Hitting children around the face and head may cause permanent injury and could come under the heading of "child abuse." It is wise to spank your children in private.

He should make them attend all the services along with the parents. While they eat at his table and sleep in his beds, he should make them do what the Lord wants them to do. Anarchy in the home will bring the home to utter ruin. We need to obey God and leave the results with Him.

D. Dad is the Pastor of the home.

He is to be, "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity" (I Tim. 3:4). He is responsible to gather his family together daily and lead them in Bible reading and prayer. It is not to be left to his wife, though she may be able to assist or take part. He should watch the attitude and spiritual growth of each one in the home. He should provide wholesome recreation, good books, and godly music for his children. He will enroll his children in a Christian school or home school them. The Bible tells us to, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). The Bible says. "Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jeremiah 10:2). The public schoolhouse is an unequal yoke for our family (II Cor. 6:14-18).

I would recommend that the television set be put out of the house. It sits in the living room of the home and presents swearing, nudity, and sex. King David said, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes" (Psalm 101:2,3). It may surprise you to learn that there is life after television. My set went out

with the garbage thirty years ago. A radio with a remote and the internet with a monitor is all you need for news and the weather. The computer, radio, cellphone, I-pod, CD player, and cassette player should all be regulated and monitored by Dad.

Rock and roll music should never be allowed in the home. Television should not be allowed in your child's bedroom. Your children do not have the freedom to do as they please in your home. It is your home and you set the rules. If they do not like it, they can get their own home. We need to remember that "the tail does not wag the dog." We are not to revolve around our children. They are to revolve around Mom and Dad. Raising children to be Christians is not a "lucky occurrence" it is a "planned procedure."

E. Dad is to be the rock of the home.

It is absolutely necessary for the father to continue in the faith during good times and bad times, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58). He is to be the strong, unshakable one, realizing that consistency is the glory of Christian living. When sickness and death come, he must stand, though it may be with tears. When decisions are made he must stick by them. If he does wrong and makes mistakes, he should be willing to admit it. Honesty and humility are not signs of weakness, but rather of spiritual strength.

He is the one his children will copy, and he needs to walk before them in Christian dignity. If he is a fundamental Bible believer, they will be also. If he is a New-evangelical compromiser, they will be also, and usually more. If he compromises, it is in spite of the fact that he knows better. When they compromise, it will be because they are following their father.

F. He will love his wife as precious.

The husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. The Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). She is the object of his affections, and if necessary, he will protect her with his very life. He loves her as much when she does something wrong, as when she does something right. He loves her just as much when she spends too much money or when she bangs up the car. He does not undermine her with the children by ridiculing her or taking their part against her. If he wants to overrule something she has told the children, he should arrange to do it in private consultation with her, rather than in

front of them. She keeps the home for him, and he appreciates that, knowing that he could never take her place or pay her salary.

According to I Corinthians 7:1-5, he is not to refuse sexual relations with his wife. He is to satisfy her sexual needs as well as his own. Their sexual relations should be normal, as God intended they should be. He is to love her, lest she be tempted by Satan to look elsewhere for satisfaction. It needs to be said that he is to be faithful to his wife, "Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?" (Proverbs 5:19,20).

2. The position and responsibility of the wife and mother.

A. She is in subjection to her husband.

The Word of God says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord" (Colossians 1:18). Again we read, "Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (Ephesians 5:24). The Scriptures are very clear that she is to be in subjection to him, and that he is to rule over her. God created her to be his helpmeet. She is to obey him, not fighting him, or creating an undercurrent with the children.

There are various ways women are tempted to thwart their husband and get their own way. They may use silence, crying, refusing sexual relations, no meals (especially breakfast). Some wives are very unwise in talking about their husbands in a negative manner to other women friends. The Word of God tells us about the virtuous woman, "She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life" (Proverbs 31:12). This kind of woman makes her husband famous, "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land" (Proverbs 31:23). The virtuous woman is not one who nags her husband, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (Proverbs 31:26). Her opposite is found in Proverbs 21:9 "It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house." The word "brawling woman" means a "woman of contention." Blessed is the man who has a virtuous wife.

B. She is the keeper of the home.

The Apostle Paul wrote to Pastor Timothy, and encouraged him to have the older women teach the younger 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 2:4,5). The phrase "keepers at home" means a stayer

at home, a domestic. She is to be happy at home, making it the nest it ought to be. (Example is Proverbs 31:10-31). There is no room for a career outside the home. If she is a mother, she has a full time job at home. Only in case of dire need, should a mother go to work. If there are no children, or the children have grown up and left the home, her free time can be used in Christian work proper for women. The desire to have the things of this world is a reason why many wives go to work.

There are a few undesirable consequences when a wife goes to work. I will list some that I have noticed, or that have been shared with me:

1. Since she is bringing home part of the family income, she will want a voice in how it is to be spent. Dad may no longer be the head of the house.

2. Children will go to the Happy Day Care center. Someone else will now be raising your child. Discipline and obedience will suffer.

3. Contact with other men at work may bring temptation, flirting, unfaithfulness, and divorce. It is no accident that the divorce rate has been climbing since women have gone to work. Fifty years ago the divorce rate was 2%. Today the divorce rate is 60%.

4. The added income will lead to worldliness. The things of this world will become more pre-eminent in the life.

5. In attempting to make it up to your children, you will spoil them. There is guilt about leaving them, so you let them do whatever they want, and you give them anything their little heart desires. This will not compensate for parental neglect, nor will it cause them to love you.

6. Her respect for her husband will lessen. She will resent the fact that he could not provide for them. Should she be moved ahead by her employer she will wonder why he never gets a promotion. Perhaps she will make more money than he does, she begins to chide him, trouble ahead.

7. Children rebel in reaction to the neglect and lack of love. Again, it is no accident that teenage and college age rebellion runs parallel with the increase in working wives over the last fifty years.

C. She is the discipliner in the absence of the father.

When the father is not home she will spank the children and teach them to fear the consequences of disobedience. She may save the hard cases for when Dad comes home. Children who do not learn to fear Mom and Dad will never fear God. She needs to stand behind the head of the house. She should do everything she can to support her husband. She

should enforce his decisions by reminding the children, "You know what your Dad said." If she disagrees with something he has set forth, she ought to discuss it with him privately. The children should not observe division in the home.

D. She needs to love her family.

The Bible says the wives are "to love their husbands, to love their children" (Titus 2:4). It is hard to believe that women have to be taught to love their husbands and to love their children. Yet the Word of God says it is so. Many times children are unwanted because of the lack of mutual consent, or because of selfish sexual desires. The mother may have to ask the Lord to help her love all her children, and seek to get them into the kingdom of God. Mother should always be there to love them and hold them in her arms.

She should make herself available to her husband at all times (except when unclean) according to the Word of God in I Cor. 7:1-5. She ought to refuse any requests to engage in abnormal sexual activity. It is necessary that she keep him from "the strange woman" temptation by satisfying his needs.

3. The rearing of children

From Infancy to Grade School

Nursing the baby was ordained of God. It is best for the mother and the child. Unless there is a specific medical reason to stop breast feeding, no one will ever need to buy a bottle.

The baby should sleep all night. Early, the child should be made to conform to the sleep requirements of Mom and Dad. When a child cries at night he is either hungry, dirty, or sick. In every case there should be some relief available.

If the baby is crying and there are no tears, it may be self-will asserting itself. A little pat on the diapered behind may help stop the crying. Grandparents tend to spoil the baby by picking them up. This should be discouraged.

Feed them until they can feed themselves in a proper way. Wallowing in their food like little pigs tends to manifest itself in later years with sloppy eating habits.

Teach them to say "please" and "thank you." They ought to learn good manners and respect, early in life.

Keep the baby clean and warmly dressed. Runny noses and chapped

bottoms ought to be tended to right away. A neglected child gives you a poor testimony as a Christian.

See that they pick up their clothes and put away their toys. It teaches them to be responsible persons and it will help them greatly, later on in life.

They are not to see themselves as the center of attraction. There is nothing worse than a spoiled child who thinks that Mom and Dad are to revolve around him or her.

Teach them to pray as soon as they can talk. This will fix early in their life that there is a God, and that He is to be sought. To ask God to save them, when they are enlightened about the gospel, will be much easier to do if they have been taught to pray.

Teach them to sit by you in church. They should be brought into the pew and trained to sit quietly through the services. You may have to take them out once or twice to paddle them, but it will pay rich rewards. A writing pad or a cup of Cheerios to nibble on is not out of place to keep them occupied when they are very young. Sending them off to Junior Church is only a temporary solution to a permanent problem. Sooner or later you will have to make them shape up and listen to the preaching of the Word with you.

See that they have their own copy of the Bible. They should realize that it is a precious book. Each person should have their own Bible just like they have their own toothbrush.

There is no such thing as an "Age of Accountability". Start teaching them early about their need of salvation. Matt. 18:6 talks about "these little ones which believe in me" and your little one should be a believer as soon as possible. Take them to a Fundamental church where salvation is preached and an invitation to receive Christ as Saviour is regularly extended.

Encourage Bible memorization. We are told about Timothy "that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:15).

Be careful to cover up nakedness in the home. Children are not to see mother and father naked (Leviticus 18:7-16). Brothers and sisters are not to see each other naked. Ham looked upon the nakedness of his father Noah, and it brought a curse on his descendants (Gen. 9:18-27). Modesty should be taught to our children from the very beginning.

Show your child much love and tender care. They should be assured that you love them very much. They need reassurance and a feeling of being wanted very much.

From Grade School to High School

You should see that the homework is done and that it is done neatly. Early in their school years, the habit of doing the work should be instilled. It will mean much in their future Christian service, if they can be counted on to get the job done.

They should not be allowed to believe that Mom and Dad revolve around them. They are not little "prima donnas" who should be put on a pedestal and adored. To spoil a child is to guarantee a selfish and self-willed teen.

Make them attend Sunday School, Church, and Young People's Meetings. It is not an option, there may be all kinds of excuses put forth, but you should firmly insist that they be there. Many young people will be glad to be in all the meetings. Those who try to skip out usually have a spiritual problem. You have the control of the situation. They should not be left home because they are unsaved. It is no different than making them eat, wash, go to bed, go to school, etc. Should this area of raising your child be lost, it is because you are weak and disobedient to God (see Prov. 22:6).

Encourage listening to good music and participating in sports. Make good Christian music a priority in your home. Buy a piano and give your children lessons. As much as possible, let them take part in clean sports activity. There are many things you do not want to let your children participate in. These things must be replaced by wholesome things.

Enroll your children in a Christian School. They belong there and it is not the will of God for us to hand them over to the State (see Prov. 22:6). The tuition for a Christian School will be an added expense, but it is the will of God for your child. It does not COST to send your children to a Christian School, it PAYS to send them there. You will be thankful you made the choice as the years go by.

You do not ask your children if they would like to attend a Christian School, you simply enroll them. The Public School today is a cesspool you do not want your children to swim in. Martin Luther said, "Education without salvation is damnation" and it is truer today than when he said it. Would you send your children to a Modernistic Church? The same people who go there, teach in the Public (State) School. Your children need to be sheltered from the world's habits, talk, and philosophy. In the Christian School, the teachers are seeking the

same goal as the parents. If a Christian School is not in your area, or if you definitely cannot afford the tuition, the Home School is permitted for your children. You can teach your children at home with good Christian textbooks. A Beka Books from Pensacola, Florida, is a good source for all your home school needs. The state cannot refuse your right to teach your children at home.

Monitor the television and the radio. What your children hear and watch is your primary concern. Do not be timid about asking what they are listening to. There are some Christian stations available with decent programs. Listening to rock music should not be allowed. The television is the greatest source for evil that exists in the Christian home today. If it refuses to leave the home, it needs to be carefully monitored for swearing and nudity. The lack of spirituality in the home can usually be traced back to the "boob tube." Some will disagree, but the following Scriptures should be reviewed, Gal. 6:7, 8; I John 2:15-17; Gal. 1:4.

Talk with your children and draw them out. Openly discuss the things concerning the Christian life. Point out clearly the things that are false and contrary to God's Word. Your opinions are important to them. Let them see how you think, how you analyze things, and how you come to your conclusions. They need to know where they came from, why they are here, and where they are going. You have the answers; give them to your children.

You cannot chain them up like a dog. You have to forge unseen chains of suggestion, controlled activity, flexibility with firmness, bonus for choosing good things, money to stop at McDonalds, etc.

From High School to College

Carefully lead them to see that Christian college is desirable and that it is the only education you will pay for. Take them to see the school and extol its virtues often. Point out the ungodliness that pervades the secular college. If you have enrolled them in a Christian school it will be natural to attend a Christian college. All young people do not have to go to college, and they should not be made to feel unspiritual for choosing out employment instead. Some may want to marry and raise a family. The leading of the Lord should be sought more than the leading of the parents.

Control the company they keep. Never feel hesitant about asking them who they were with, where they went, and what they did. It is your responsibility to know all about it. If they need to be separated from bad company, God expects you to do it. Set a time for them to be in and enforce it. Our children do not have a right to the car, the credit card, or

our money. It is a privilege granted by very kind, well respected, and perfectly obeyed parents.

What should they be doing with their spare time? There are many good games they can play with each other or their parents. Crafts or hobbies should be encouraged. Many hours can be spent putting puzzles together. Attendance at dances and movies should be forbidden. Sometimes idle hands can be the devil's workshop. They should be encouraged to use their free time in Christian activities. Personal Bible study should find a place in the life of the Christian teen.

The Sexuality of the child and its progress

Sex education should be given to your child in progressive pieces and in all seriousness. Questions should be answered as they are asked without volunteering much more additional information. When they are old enough they should be warned against having pre-marital sex. The Word of God calls it fornication, and God calls it sin, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" I Cor. 6:18). It should be explained to them that pregnancy will most likely follow sexual relations. Christian parents should not teach their children how to avoid pregnancy by using contraceptive devices. They should teach them abstinence until marriage. They should be given to understand that sexual relations with the opposite sex are to be reserved for after the wedding.

The female should be prepared for the beginning of menstruation. It should not come to her as a shock. Mother should carefully explain to her what to look for, and why it happens. It is not the responsibility of the Christian school to teach this matter.

The male will experience sexual sensitivity. When evidence of this is discovered it should not upset you or cause great concern. There is a sensitivity which is developing which is a natural part of the male reproductive system. A response to that sensitivity is not necessarily evil and the Scriptures are silent about it. It can be, and should be, minimized by not leaving the child alone, not letting him wear tight fitting clothing, and keeping female nudity from his view. Pictures of women in sensuous attire, often found in magazines, should be removed from the house. Television programs which display female nudity and promiscuous love making should be turned off. An obsession with sex coupled with pictures of desire will fill the mind with adulterous thoughts and sin will be the result, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28).

Petting should not be permitted. It is God's intended way to lead to sexual relations. It is reserved for married people. Right here is where many Christian parents lose the battle to raise their children for the Lord. They will look the other way and pretend not to see because they lack the courage to stop it. They assure themselves that it is harmless, and that nothing will come of it. They are willingly ignorant of the sinful nature (Jer. 17:9) and the fire within (Proverbs 6:27). They will eventually find out that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

Dating and Chaperoning

The attraction to the opposite sex is natural and should not be squelched. Sooner or later your child will desire to date and seek a mate for life. The choosing of a mate should be a matter for much prayer and spiritual concern. A lifetime of happiness or grief is at stake here.

Do not let your children date the unsaved. Invite them to your home and question them concerning faith in Christ. Be aware that many will profess faith or conversion to achieve their end. Take your time and be sure, before you permit them to date your son or daughter. Once you are satisfied that the prospective date is a Christian, you will want to see that they are properly chaperoned. If they are in high school, this is a necessity. Most Christian colleges require chaperoning or the use of a dating parlor. It will keep your children pure and out of trouble. To send your child off in a car, with a date and not chaperoned is to invite certain trouble. Dates should be to Christian activities or clean recreation. Personally, I would not recommend dating while in high school.

If dating a lost person has already begun, you should insist on having the date visit with you. Explain the gospel of Christ to them, and seek to bring them to Christ. If they are antagonistic to the gospel, you should put a stop to the dating. Never let them be together without a chaperone. You definitely do not want them forced into marriage with the lost.

Should your child marry?

Many parents become upset if their children do not marry. Some are embarrassed and seem to think their unmarried child is deficient in character. This ought not to be. A Christian man or woman, who for one reason or another, choose to stay single, is not to be considered as coming short. We need to remember the Scripture which says, "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the

Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: But she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband" (I Cor.7:32-34).

Some stay single to serve the Lord without distraction. Some stay single because they have not found the right mate for them. Better to stay single than to marry the wrong person and regret it for a lifetime. We need to remember that marriage lasts until death parts us, or until the Lord Jesus Christ comes from Heaven to receive us unto Himself. While most children will marry, it is not abnormal to stay single.

The Bible forbids pre-marital sexual relations and when they occur, God sees them as one, as though they were married. Those who engage in pre-marital sexual relations have a moral obligation to marry. To shirk the responsibility and go on to another is to commit adultery. The Word of God says, "And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife" (Exodus 22:16).

Choosing the right mate

The only right mate for a Christian is another born again, genuine Christian. The Word of God is very clear, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (II Cor.6:14-17). Unless it has already been made a necessity, you should not be agreeable to your child marrying a lost person. Of course, the best prevention is to never permit them to date the lost.

Now assuming that the mate will be a Christian, let us go on to some further considerations. Parents are always tempted to be matchmakers. They need to realize that the decision is not theirs to make. There is nothing wrong with placing their children in an environment with other Christians of the opposite sex, or with introducing their children to one of the opposite sex. But to seek to cleverly engineer a marriage is wrong. It is best to stand back and leave the matter in the Lord's hands. He can do a much better job.

The Christian young person seeking to choose the right mate should look for several things. Do you both have the same spiritual desires? Are you both dedicated to do the Lord's will, and to go where He wants you to go? Can you agree doctrinally, and what church will you attend? Will the man be the head of the house, and the woman in subjection? What about a family? Should your decision to marry be based solely on physical attraction? Marriage should be consummated after much prayer and reading of the Word of God. A period of engagement should be as long as necessary to allow each one to be sure. If it becomes evident that you should not marry, break the engagement. God has someone else

for you in His own good time. Even now He is preparing your mate for life. If you have found the right mate, then go on together, asking God to bless your home.

What kind of career for your child?

As your child grows up, his or her abilities will become apparent. A vocation will usually be chosen in line with the strengths your child has. School subjects in which the child does well usually provide a clue as to the type of work most acceptable. The parents should not choose the child's occupation. Neither should they be upset if a child chooses a vocation completely different than that of the parent. Dad may be a lawyer or an accountant, but the son may want to be a mechanic. Mom may be a registered nurse, but the daughter may want to be a secretary. Job satisfaction is most important to spiritual well-being. Should your child choose to be a preacher, a preacher's wife, or a missionary: please do not hinder. If the Lord is calling them, it is most important they obey Him. In short, you may advise your child regarding a vocation, but you should not choose it for him or her. They should be encouraged to pray about the occupation that God would have for them. A Christian should choose the kind of job where a testimony for Christ can be had. In other words, it should be an honest occupation, and one in which superiors cannot force you to sin against the Lord.

Meddling in your child's married life

One reason the Lord told man to leave father and mother and cleave to his wife, was to eliminate interference in the new family unit. Wise parents will leave the new married couple to manage their own lives, even if they make a few mistakes. You may think you know it all, but your son-in-law or daughter-in-law may resent your intrusion with your unsolicited advice. Your child is no longer under your dominance, and is no longer required to obey you. The best thing you can do for them is to pray and offer your advice only when it is requested. In other words, "Mind your own business". Many a home has been broken up because of doting parents who want to tell their son or daughter how to handle him or her. Proverbs 20:3 says, "It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling." Proverbs 26:17 says, "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears." It is certain they will have problems, but they will work them out. Do you remember what it was like when you were first married? Did you have any problem with your in-laws? If not, you were blessed. If you did have problems, it should have taught you a lesson.

How to be Grandparents

When you have raised your own children for the Lord; there is another wonderful blessing to follow, and that is the joy of seeing your grandchildren. This is the second family which automatically enters your world without laboring the second time. They are yours to play with and enjoy without having to raise them or provide for them. You can have a great influence upon them for Christ.

The greatest danger you are prone to is to spoil them. When Mom or Dad is disciplining them you should not interfere. Send them gifts and bring them gifts, but do not try to steal their affection away from Mom and Dad. When you are called upon to babysit, you should spank them the same as Mom or Dad would spank. They should not have to go through a crash course in discipline when you hand them back to their parents. Sometimes grandparents are asked to babysit while Mom goes to work. You ought to make up your mind in advance to refuse this request. It is usually not in the best interest of your child's Christian home. (See the section on the Position and Responsibility of the Wife and Mother).

What about the so-called Age of Accountability?

There is a doctrine held by many sincere believers that children who die are automatically saved by the blood of Christ, before they reach the Age of Accountability. No one knows what that age is. Some preachers have been known to tell Sunday School Teachers not to urge their young students to be saved, since they have not reached the Age of Accountability. There is no such teaching found in the Word of God. The Bible says that all men are condemned because of Adam's sin, "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Romans 5:18a).

Salvation is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Infants and young children die before they are able to exercise faith in Christ. Developmentally challenged children may live many years from birth without being able to exercise faith in Christ, and then die. We have reason to believe the shed blood of Christ will save them. The infant son of King David and Bathsheba died. David said, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (II Samuel 12:23). We assume that when David died, he went to be where his infant son was. In Psalm 23, David said, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever." David was not talking about the grave, but about life after death.

When Abraham was interceding for the righteous in Sodom, he made this statement, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25). When God saves infants, young children, and developmentally

challenged children, it will be through His choosing to apply the blood of Christ to their souls. It will not be because they believed, but because He chose to do so.

If God had given us an Age of Accountability for our children, we would be prone to neglect their salvation until they reached such an age. God desires that we should teach them how to be saved as soon as they can hear and understand. We are to pray and seek their soul's salvation as early as possible. Many a child has been saved at the age of 3 or 4. Should they die before salvation through faith in Christ, we may trust God with them, and "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" He alone knows when they are accountable.

4. The Unsavd Mate

When a person becomes a Christian there is a change wrought by God in that person's life. The Christian begins to have a new outlook on the life to be lived. Thoughts, words, and deeds are brought under the control of Christ, and the unsavd mate soon notices the change. Sometimes the mate will respond favorably and trust Christ for salvation also. Often there will be a period of "wait and see" as the unsavd watches to see whether this change is for real and that it is lasting. It is very important the believer follow the instructions given in the Word of God.

In I Cor. 7:10-17 there is much good counsel in this regard. It is very clear that the unsavd mate is in a favorable position to be saved because of the presence of the believer. We have instances in Scripture where whole households were brought to Christ, such as Cornelius, Lydia, and the Philippian jailor. Many Christian homes today, with both parents saved were not always that way. My own personal experience is that my wife came to Christ six months after I was saved.

The Christian husband should begin to function as the head of the home, if he has not always been so. He should be guided by the Scriptures as set forth in the section on the Position and Responsibility of the Husband and Father. The Christian wife should begin to be in subjection to her husband, if she is not already, and be guided by the Scriptures set forth in the section on the Position and Responsibility of the Wife and Mother. The saved mate should not allow the unsavd mate to draw him or her into that which is sinful. The Word of God says, "The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (II Tim. 2:19). Consistency is the gem in the Christian life that draws people to Christ.

5. The Unsavd Children

The Bible encourages us to believe God will save them, "For the

unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." It is a great blessing for children when one of their parents is saved. They are in the presence of the Holy Spirit of God living in their parent. Of course it is better if both parents are born again.

Salvation and eternal life does not pass to your children through the genes. We are to pray and seek their soul for Christ, and be consistent in living before them. Our children must put their faith in Christ if they would be saved. Jesus talked about "these little ones which believe in me." (Matt. 18:6). One of the things we learn quickly is that we cannot legislate spirituality. Though we may teach them prayers, have them read their Bible, and attend church, we cannot make them get saved.

Parents must also realize that browbeating, chiding, and publicly embarrassing them, concerning their need to be saved will not help. To the other extreme, there are parents who think they ought not to make their children attend church because they are not saved. This is simply an excuse on the part of parents who do not want to rock the boat and hassle with their children about church attendance. Let me say without hesitation, it is your job to see they attend all the services, whether they are saved or not. Your children should never go to HELL because you did not have the spiritual backbone to make them go to church. Must they attend church? ABSOLUTELY.

You need to remember this. When your children live in your home they must abide by the rules of your home. They pay no rent, they eat your food, they sleep in your beds, they sometimes have access to your car, and you wash their clothes. You pay the electric and heating bills. They are not independent, they rely on you. God has told them, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." This is the will of God for your home whether they are saved or not.

If they are out of school and continue to live at home, they are required to be in subjection to you. If they are rebellious, and refusing to comply with your rules, they should be told to get their own place. Other children in your home will be encouraged to rebel also, when they see them living independently of your rules. If they refuse to submit, and they get their own place, they are to pay all of their own bills. Do not subsidize them in their private living quarters because they will not submit at home. Do not let them bring their dirty clothes home for Mom to wash. Many a young person begins to shape up when they realize what it will cost them to live independently in rebellion.

6. Family Planning

Sooner or later, the Christian couple will have to make a decision

concerning how large their family should be. God gave Adam and Noah a command to replenish the earth (Gen. 1:28 and Gen. 9:1). It would seem that the command is not applicable to us, seeing that the earth has been replenished. An unlimited number of children is an option as well as a limited number of children. There are no teachings in the New Testament on the size of our family. There are several real considerations that may govern the size of our families. The health of the mother should be a consideration. Should the doctor say that it would be unwise for the mother to go through another pregnancy, it might well decide the issue. In today's economy the ability of the father to provide should be considered. Larger quarters may have to be secured, more groceries put on the table, more clothing purchased, and larger tuition bills must be faced. There is a price to pay.

There is a certain danger involved for those families who have only one child. Sometimes an only child can be spoiled by being the center of attraction. When there are other children in the home, there is seldom a center of attraction. Should anything happen to that one child at an older age, the couple would be childless at a time when it would be difficult to start a new family. Some couples, after the first child is born, may find physical reasons which forbid further children. There is no room for criticism when a family chooses to have only one child. Neither should there be any criticism of a Christian couple, without children. Whether they are unable to have children or not, it is plainly their own business before the Lord.

The procreation of children should be always by mutual consent. Though the wife is in subjection to her husband, it is also true that he is to love her, and consider her as precious. The husband should lead his wife into mutual agreement; so that the end result of their decision is a happy one.

7. Family Provisions

Who should handle the money? The decision here is up to the husband as he is the head of the home. How should the money be spent? We are to be good stewards of what God gives us. Should Christians buy on the installment plan? Some choose to pay cash or do without, and refer us to Romans 13:8 where it says "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." Some choose to buy and make payments with interest added, and as long as they make their contracted payments, they "owe no man anything." There are a few dangers with buying on credit that we should consider. It is too easy to buy what you do not really need. Also, it is possible to lose your testimony because of an inability to pay bills when they are due. Sometimes bankruptcy may be the result. We need to realize that when we use credit cards, we are selling our tomorrows. Our

freedom to serve the Lord, and to go where He wants us to go, or do what He wants us to do, may be lost because we are obligated to pay yesterday's bills.

We should learn how to be content with very little. Clothes do not have to be expensive to keep you warm. Hamburger as well as steak can fill the empty void in the stomach. Four walls do not make a home, it is the people inside. Entertainment for your children may cost a lot, but playing with them costs very little. The important thing about a car is not how beautiful it is, but whether it runs. We can live without expensive vacations and sometimes with no vacation at all. There are several Scriptures I would recommend to the Christian couple for further study: I John 2:15-17; Luke 12:15; 1 Tim. 6:5-11; Phil. 4:11-13.

Is it unspiritual to have a savings account? The lowly ant teaches us to have a little store for future times of need (see Proverbs 6:6-11). There should be a balance between an attitude of thrift and an undue hoarding of this world's goods.

Should a Christian purchase Life Insurance? It is possible to create an estate of thousands of dollars with the stroke of a pen and the payment of a small premium. Most Christians today do not have enough money sitting in the bank to take care of their widows and children. Some Christians think it is very unspiritual to buy life insurance, and they say, "Should we not trust the Lord to provide?" When questioned, they will admit to having auto insurance. They also carry hospitalization policies. They might even go to work every day. They might have insurance on their homes and their possessions. If the Lord will provide for their widow and children, why do those things?

The truth is that God expects us to work and provide for our own, "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" (I Tim. 5:8). The responsibility to provide for your own does not end at death. The Lord Jesus Christ did not leave us as orphans in this world to make our way alone. The Christian who wants to provide for his own after his death is well advised to purchase a large amount of Decreasing Term Life Insurance to protect his family while they are growing up. You should state your desires to your insurance representative, and ask him or her to tailor a policy consistent with your family needs and your budget. There is only one reason to buy Life Insurance—it is because you love somebody.

What about drawing up a will? A will can effect important tax savings and make the best use of your estate for your family. A will can be used to create a trust for your wife and/or children. In a will, you can

designate what you want done for each person. The most important aspect of a will for a Christian couple is the setting up of guardians for your children. If you do not have a will, the State will make one for you. If children are left as orphans, they may be placed in the home of an unsaved relative because of the rigidity of the law. You can choose the guardians for your children, and they do not have to be relatives. You ought to arrange for Christians to have custody of your children. Having a will drawn up is not as expensive as you may think. Call a lawyer and ask for his price in advance. You may head off a spiritual disaster for your children.

What about the money your children earn? If they want something you are not willing or obliged to buy them, they can use their own money. Of course, I am talking about dependent children. If they are out of school and working while living at home, they ought to pay you board money to help with the food, rent, etc. They should have a savings account where they can save their money for college or future plans.

8. Adultery, Divorce, and Remarriage

We are living in a day when 6 out of 10 marriages end in divorce. The far reaching consequence of such living is the downfall and destruction of America. A real Biblical Christian home will almost never end in divorce. When it does happen, it is usually due to the sin of Adultery. This is the area where Satan tempts the Christian couple, and it is mentioned in I Cor. 7:5. In the Old Testament, God told His people Israel, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). Those who did so were to be put to death (Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22). God is against it, and therefore He is against you when you contemplate it or engage in it. Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:27,28).

When discovered, it often ends in divorce, because your mate's faith in you has been destroyed. It is also a fearful thing, when you consider the possibility of venereal disease which can be passed along to your spouse and children. Until the other person's lips are sealed in death, there is always the fear of exposure to live with. You may ask God to forgive your sin, and be restored to fellowship, but you cannot undo the consequences of your foolish act. Your Christian testimony will be silenced for fear of later exposure. It is not the kind of sin which can be confessed and restitution made. For instance, when a man steals, he can confess it publicly and restore what he stole. Public confession is almost impossible to accomplish because of the far reaching effects on others.

Those who are tempted to commit adultery should pause for a moment and consider the end thereof. For a short moment of stolen pleasure, they are going to sell their tomorrows. Years will be spent in anguish of soul because of a desire to flatter your ego; "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Remember, the harvest is always larger than the seed that is sown.

It will be well to consider here what divorce does to the children. It immediately deprives them of one parent. They do not understand, and they will resent both for what each has done to the other. They will not take sides. Parental authority will break down and the end result will be delinquency. Notice the difference in children who have lost a parent in death and those who have lost a parent by divorce. Upon remarriage, the children will have a false mother or father, and there will always be a difference. You cannot call out parental affection when one is not the parent. In the end, the happiness of the children is destroyed. If there is no other reason to stay together, this would have to be sufficient.

The Lord Jesus spoke against remarriage after a divorce has occurred. It is well to consider His words, "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery" (Luke 16:18). The Word of God is telling a divorced person to stay single.

9. Family Devotions

It is good to have Bible reading and prayer with your children. An early time in the morning before the children head off to school is good for some. Others may find it better after the evening meal. Some may prefer before bedtime. Dad should choose and read the Scripture, making application to our life as he is led. It is wise to read portions that are easier to be understood by all present. The New Testament poses no problems, but there are some places in the Old Testament that might be left out for the present moment. For instance, the beginning and ending of Job is excellent reading, but the lengthy discourses sandwiched in between may not hold the family interest. In other words, choose Scriptures that you can more easily explain, and that the whole family can understand.

After reading and discussing the Scripture, there should be a time of prayer. The position in prayer is not so important as the attitude and reverence. Some pray around the table or room, others may designate one or two to pray. Prayer should be for daily needs and opportunities to witness. Guidance and wisdom from God should be sought.

Conclusion

I am painfully aware that my experiences and knowledge are limited. The material contained herein is drawn from the Scriptures, personal experience, and observation. The Scriptures are infallible concerning the areas of life to which they are directed. It is wisdom to obey them and leave the results with God. My own personal experiences and observations are included in order to be helpful to other Christian families. God has blessed my family, and my desire is that your family may be similarly blessed.

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