

– *WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN HOME?*

CHAPTER 1

GOD – MARRIAGE – It was His idea

Let's think together about the Christian marriage. Marriage was God's idea. Let's look at what makes a Christian marriage and a Christian home. What does it mean to be married – from God's viewpoint? What is the duty of each member of the family? According to the Bible, what is each member to do in order to maintain a proper Christian perspective and responsibility as a part of the family? Let's start where God started it all. We call it "Marriage".

Marriage is the only institution that has come down to us from the other side of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:21-25). God ordained marriage before sin entered the world and intended for it to be the fullest, richest and most joyous life on planet earth. If it fails in being this, the fault is not in the institution itself but in those who enter into it carelessly and fail to fulfill its conditions. In fact, marriage is so important to God's plan that He makes a comparison in the book of Ephesians between marriage and the Church. "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 wives be to their own husbands. Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it... So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself" (Ephesians 5:23-25; 28). The Church should be a reflection of the home, and the home should be a reflection of the Church.

Pre-Marital Check List

Expectation in marriage varies in many ways. Some get married for the wrong motives such as: physical attraction, financial security, physical security, emotional stability, sexual compatibility, freedom from parents, escape from a bad home, a poor self-image, approval and the list continues. Sooner or later these motives will surface and will put the marriage in jeopardy. Each should be absolutely honest and open with each other before marriage. They should have the liberty to ask questions whether they are social, spiritual, physical or anything that might be a part of the others past. Honesty will prevent future shocks that may save the marriage. In fact, every romantic relationship requires the test of time, as well as the test of an occasional separation. This is a fundamental practice in determining God's will. Time apart will make the heart grow fonder, either for the one you plan to marry or for someone else. Make sure your relationship has experienced the time test.

God planned for many of our individual needs to be met through marriage. The need for companionship, family, social acceptance, sexual intimacy and many other needs are met through marriage. “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and these two shall become one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31). God ordained marriage for the comfort, happiness and well being of mankind. It is a part of God’s original plan. It is not a relationship that evolved. It is not a custom into which men fell into during the early days of the human race. It is not a mere arrangement or relationship that is temporary and man-made. It is of Divine origin as a part of God’s creation, which God ordained to be a life-long commitment to each other. “What God has joined together let no man put asunder” (Mark 10:9). It is His ordained institution for men and women to join in a physical and emotional relationship and to have the privilege of bringing forth children into the world.

There is no relationship on earth so close and sacred as the relationship of marriage. It supersedes the relationship of a child to mother or father. Our Savior, Himself, directed that a man should forsake father and mother and cleave unto his wife (Genesis 2:24). This is not to be taken as meaning that a man should neglect father or mother - far from that. It means that the marriage relationship and obligations come first. From the moment a man and woman stand at the marriage altar, their highest duty is to each other.

A minister of the gospel should perform a Christian marriage. It is a ceremony so solemn, so fraught with possibilities of good or evil, so bound up with the eternal destiny of the lives of people that a cheap or flippant mode of entrance thereupon should not be tolerated. In marriage, two hearts and lives are being joined, becoming one for their lifetime. This was God’s original plan for marriage before the fall of man into sin. “For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). One is the only number that is not divisible.

Here is a famous quote that gives God’s perspective on marriage. “If God meant for woman to rule over man, He would have taken her out of Adam’s head. Had he designed her to be his slave, He would have taken her out of his feet. But God took woman out of man’s side, for He made her to be a helpmate and an equal with him” (Augustine).

Commitment

Marriage is a bond that can only be dissolved by death. The ceremony is focused on a covenant between two people who exchange vows and pledge to each other to “love, honor and cherish until death do us part”. The ceremony anticipates commitment exclusive of future events regardless of what happens. “For better or for worse, in sickness or in health, for richer or for poorer.” These two people stand before God and form a covenant that only death can annul. It is not difficult for us to think that the angels of heaven hush their songs and grow silent in wonder while holy vows are taken, and two hearts and lives are thus joined by Divine appointment. A ceremony so holy, so sacred, so filled with destiny that as Christians, it should only be done in the presence of Christians who understand the sacredness of this occasion. Let’s not be guilty of treating this Divine plan lightly.

What is to be expected of these people if marriage is to prove to them the blessing God intended it to be? What must they have in their hearts? What will sustain this new relationship? Will there be any adjustments or conflicts? Let's consider some of these.

Flexibility and Understanding

Every pastor of a church knows the truth of this. When two lives are joined together, there is, necessarily, for a time, a dashing of life against life. We all come from different backgrounds, families, temperaments and personalities. Many adjustments must be made, and each must have an understanding heart and mind to blend this relationship together. They begin to understand that there is a big difference in the way a man and a woman thinks. Things that are important to a woman are insignificant to a man, and things that are important to a man are insignificant to a woman. The discovery is soon made that those habits, tastes and inclinations differ much more widely than was thought possible during those wondrous courtship days! If both were just alike, marriage would soon be boring. God made us different so that we can compliment each other as we mature.

The best way to make these adjustments is to frequently use the following eight words: "I am sorry, forgive me and I love you." Here is a verse to reinforce this. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). At the discovery of many differences, couples sometimes grow disheartened and conclude at once that their marriage was a dreadful mistake. Understand again, marriage requires sacrifice and adjustments to each other. It is easy to forget how wonderful it was and how much in love you were before marriage. Again, marriage is a Divine plan that merges two lives into one, and by taking it one day at a time, you will begin to mature and compliment each other in every thing you do. As someone has said, "You never really know a person until you live with him or her, and getting to know them is the joy of married life."

Let me illustrate how it all works. Have you ever stood and watched as two streams of water merge with each other? One can be a muddy stream and the other clear water. Where the two streams meet there is the sharp dividing line. The murky water stands out sharply and distinctly from the clearer water. As you follow the stream, you will be surprised to find that within a comparatively short distance all signs of distinction are lost. The streams have completely merged. So it is when two lives merge in marriage. Union and perfect co-mingling can never be forced. It comes quietly and gradually - but it will come - and your lives together will be finer, nobler and stronger than if there had been no differences to overcome. Each will have won a moral victory over his own soul, and the united life together in the Lord Jesus Christ will bring calm and peaceful waters to a wonderful relationship.

Sometimes in the middle of your frustration and selfishness, the devil will try to destroy the relationship. One word that a Christian couple should both agree never to consider or discuss is the word "divorce". It is never the answer. It is the devil's lie to make you think that all your problems would be solved. If you have sought God's will and He has brought you together, and with His grace and guidance and your perseverance, you can make

it work. When you look back years later, you will understand the bond of true love in marriage and will rejoice in the wonderful relationship that you have. All that is needed is a little wise patience. If each is patient and thoughtful toward the other, adjustment will occur very quickly, and you will discover that marriage, when you are in the center of God's will, is the most wonderful relationship on earth.

Determination

Building a marriage relationship is not easy. There must be fewer thoughts of happiness and more thoughts of the simple, unadorned job of marriage. When a scientist shuts himself up for years in the laboratory for research, when a child is born crippled and some mother's heart is chained to the little couch of suffering, we do not press upon them with idiotic inquiries as to whether or not they are happy. Such a question would be an insult. Marriage is a commitment that we are to see through. We are to look before we leap, and having leaped, we are to remain committed at the post of duty. There never was a marriage that could have possibly been a success or a marriage that could have possibly been a failure.

No one has a right to happiness unless he wins it by devotion, courage and self-sacrifice. These three qualities bring the happiness and joy God intended when two become one in Him through marriage. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21). Happiness is not the motivational goal. It changes like the wind. Happiness is a result of obedience in doing God's will according to God's Word. "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Do all things without murmuring and disputing" (Philippians 2:13-14). For the Christian couple, marriage should be one new life existent in two persons.

If happiness is primarily sought and made the chief end and aim of marriage, it eludes the feverish grasp and escapes. If, however, men and women gird themselves for the adventure of marriage by becoming sacrificial, patient, forgiving and determined to make a success of the venture at any cost, then they find happiness! Marriage is a means of grace, not of shallow human happiness. Remember, marriage is a like a triangle. The bottom two corners of the triangle are you and your mate. The top corner of the triangle is God. If you draw closer to God, you will automatically draw closer to each other, and if you draw closer to each other, you will automatically draw closer to Him and find "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

Politeness and Courtesy

If you are married, you remember what it was like before marriage, how attentive your mate was! You could not do enough to please each other. After marriage, how prone we are to drop the little amenities of life. The words "I love you," "I thank God for you," "You're special" and other encouragement's are used less frequently. The little thoughtful courtesies that mean so much to the heart and happiness of each other begin to diminish. Of course, it is not all a one-sided matter. The wife is often as neglectful in this matter as is her husband. The point is that these words and encouragement's are necessary for the success of the

married life. Make it a point that these refinements of manner toward one another be preserved.

Our hearts are loving, but not so loving that they can permanently withstand ugly treatment. The very fact that they are home hearts makes them all the more sensitive to such neglect. Home heart and home love is loyal and hardy plants but not so hardy as never to need the dew and sunshine of kind, tender and courteous actions. The fact is that there are no hearts that hunger so passionately after kindness, affection and thoughtful courtesy as the home hearts of a married couple. Many marriages have been destroyed at this point. “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (I John 3:18).

Unity of Interest

It is a very easy thing for even the hearts that love one another very dearly to drift apart. Before marriage, you each did all you could to find out what the other person liked. Then you would be sure to provide this for them. After marriage the husband has his office, cares, professional duties and daily toil. The wife has her household problems, children and social engagements. Often, before either of them is aware, they have drifted apart, and misunderstandings have become easy because interests are so far removed.

Now there are excellent ways to meet this contingency. We know a splendid man and his wife who have been almost overwhelmingly busy, each in his own line of work. However, they have not allowed that to cause them to grow apart. They read together. Each concerns themselves with the problems and hopes of the other. They worship together and pray together. The years have knit them into a perfect union of wedded love. No man is so great as to be above concern about that which affects the interest of his wife. If he is unconcerned, it is not a sign of greatness but of folly and failure to care for the most priceless treasure that God has given him. Marriage is more than finding the right person; it is being the right person. To be the right person, you must each have the right relationship with Jesus Christ. Then you will have the right relationship with each other. Please read I Corinthians chapter 13.

Vision to Avoid Misunderstanding

Married life is no place for calculating as to whose place and duty it is to make the first step toward reconciliation, to apologize first. True love knows no such decision! None but a fool will take such a course. If offensive words have been spoken during the day, let them be recalled instantly. Here is a good practice, if words of offense, or anger have been spoken during the day, this verse must be applied, “Be angry and do not sin. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Ephesians .4:26 NSAB). Before you close your eyes to sleep, be sure there is complete restoration of fellowship between you and your mate. The words “I’m sorry” will bring peace of heart plus, a goodnight sleep. True love delights in being the first

to forgive. There is no place for pride in wedded life. It would not have been permitted before marriage. Let it not be permitted now.

Jesus Christ in the Home

To leave Jesus Christ and the Bible out of your daily conversations is a fatal mistake. Jesus never had a home of His own, but He was a home lover and spent a lot of time in different homes. His presence in the home is indispensable. He loves your home and wants to be a welcomed guest at any time. Never create a situation in your home or relationship that you would not feel comfortable inviting Him in as your guest. There can really be no deep and abiding love without Him. There may be agreement, after a kind. Men and women may even live together in peace, but there is no such thing as a true home without the abiding presence of the Son of God. The heart of every home is the wife; the head of every home is the husband; the head of every husband is Christ; the head of Christ is God. “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God” (I Corinthians 11:3).

CHAPTER 2

HUSBAND – THE HEAD OF THE HOME

The first thing we must accept is that men and women are different. Men have masculine qualities, and women have feminine qualities. The very physical makeup of a man is different from the cells in his body right down to the 23 chromosomes. Males and females differ physically, emotionally, psychologically, mentally and relationally. God designed man first and determined that he needed a helper, so he created Eve. However, both were created in the image of God. “In the image of God created him, male and female” (Genesis 1:27). This makes them co-equal under God.

God clearly gave different roles to the husband and wife with a clear mandate to the husband. He is to “love his wife as Christ loved the church” (Eph 5:25), and he is to “love his wife as his own body” (Eph. 5:28). What higher goal is He to put before a husband? He is to show the same concern for her in every aspect such as: “nourish and cherish” her, protect her and have the same self-sacrificing love as Christ had for the church. When a man treats his wife like this, he will find a wife that will find it easy to respect him and submit to him as “unto the Lord”. He must understand that a woman is not a man’s property, but his partner.

In fact, this relationship determines the effectiveness of the man’s prayers and tremendously impacts his spiritual life “likewise, ye husbands, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (I Peter 3:7). This is not a reference to the spiritual or moral life, but to the physical make up of the body, which demands respect, honor and love if you are to be effective in serving the Lord.

Even in the Garden of Eden, God made it clear that the purpose of His creation was to multiply and replenish the earth. Reproduction has always been evidence of God's plan of creation. In the very next verse, God gave a command that once and for all settles the perversion concerning the thinking of today's society. He said, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). In spite of what modern man may say, there is no question that homosexuality is an evil perversion of the plan of our Creator. They cannot physically reproduce. Sodom and Gomorrah tried to violate this. God destroyed them as an example of His judgment for violation of His Divine plan. If you have questions about this, read Romans 1:26-27.

The meaning of the word "husband" is "house-band". He is the one that is to bind the home together. If the band breaks, the home will fall apart. The very name infers that the husband is to be a leader, a protector and a provider with a lot of TLC – "Tender Loving Care".

Sacrifice is demanded

Now we come to the duty of a husband to his wife, which can be summarized in one word - LOVE. "Husbands love your wives" (Ephesians 5:25). It's not an option, but how can we measure the height and depth of that word? We often use the word to describe things such as: "I love my car," "I love my dog," or "I love to ride a horse." However, when we speak of love in a marriage relationship, it moves the meaning of the word to a much higher level.

The Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). The full measure of that love is impossible to comprehend for any mortal man, but this must be the goal of every true husband because he is required to attain it! If a man really thinks this through, then all selfishness dies within him at the marriage altar. What does love include as it relates to the married life? In marriage, the wife becomes many things to her husband, but the most important thing that she becomes is his best friend. The following verse puts this love in perspective and gives us a clearer understanding of this love: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend" (John 15:13). Jesus set this example for us at the cross. We can do no less for our best friend, our wife. Now let's see how that relates to marriage.

The wife can also find herself being pulled in a hundred different directions. None of these may be evil within themselves, however, God sets a priority on the home, and we must do the same. The husband is responsible to set guidelines and be the example of leadership in the home. It is not to be passed off to his wife. She is to follow and support his example, being guided together by true biblical principles.

The husband should be the leader in prayer at meals and in home devotions at night with his wife and children. He must be a student of the Word, applying biblical teachings and truths to the many situations that arise in the home. He should take his family to church, not

send them. The home and the Church must work together in building a marriage in which Jesus Christ is the head.

Physical and Spiritual Leadership

There are men who may be great lovers but terrible leaders, and there are men who are great leaders but terrible lovers. The male ego often finds itself mentally exalted far beyond its true capacity. The key to this is balance. Both the husband and the wife must strive to achieve balance in their roles. Over commitment will put stress on the marriage relationship and tension in the home. The home is the priority, and balance is the key ingredient in investing our time. The husband may find himself consumed with business meetings, involvement in church activities several nights a week, or addicted to the sports world - the list can go on. Be sure there will be a thousand things to consume your time and take you away from your home. However, the Bible clearly teaches the order for prioritizing your family life.

1. To the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18-19)
2. One to another in the fear of God (Eph. 5:21)
3. Wives to Husband (Eph. 5:22)
4. Husband to Christ (Eph. 5:25)
5. Children to Parents (Eph. 6:1)
6. Servants to Master (Eph. 6:5)
7. Masters to God in Heaven (Eph. 6:9)

Material Provision

The word “love” includes many responsibilities and has many implications. In the wedding vows, the husband assumes the burden of support, and no true man will seek to evade this obligation. The Bible has sharp words to say about men who take their responsibility lightly in this direction. It says, “But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house he has denied faith and is worse than an infidel” (I Timothy 5:8). Normally, it is not the best thing when the wife goes out to earn part of the daily bread, especially when there are children in the home. Psychologists say that the greatest impact on a child’s life is made during the first six years. It can be the mother, or a baby sitter that will mold your child’s life. Who do you think is God’s choice? However, there may be circumstances, occasionally, where such a need may arise, but it should not be the norm. It is the husband’s responsibility to provide for the needs of the family and to do so, to the best of his ability, honoring his responsibility before God.

Many husbands make a mistake here. In their zeal to provide lavishly for their children and wife, they forget the Lord. They fail to take Him into partnership. They give nothing to God’s works and ministries, and they wonder why God does not bless them more abundantly. “It is He what giveth us power to get gain” (Deuteronomy 8:18). The true and wise man will not shower on his wife and children what rightly belongs to the Lord God of Hosts. II

Corinthians 8-9 clearly gives us instruction that giving must be a part of the Christian home. The husband must provide the material necessities for the home, but God is the ultimate supplier of our needs. As you give unto Him, you can then claim this promise, “But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

Oneness

When a man offers a woman his hand in marriage, he says by that act, of all the women on earth, he has chosen her. Oneness in marriage means two will become as one – what affects the one, affects the other. There must be tender loving care and understanding of this special person. As they live together as one, God gives this special command “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” (I Peter 3:7). Treating your wife wrongly quenches your prayers and impacts your whole life. When her physical beauty is diminishing, when her face is wrinkled, when her voice is no longer musical, when sickness has left its trace, he is to love her as truly and as deeply as ever. You are to give yourself for her “as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25). This is a high standard, and to the Christian husband, it is a standard to be practiced until heaven welcomes one of them home.

Danger zones... The treatment and thought process about women must be guarded. The “lust of the flesh” is one of man’s strongest temptations, and the devil will use it to destroy your marriage. Don’t say it can’t happen to you. Read the history of David, Solomon and others. The husband must guard his heart and mind in these matters. A man must treat women with purity (I Timothy 5:2). He must avoid any thought of, or sexual activity, outside of marriage (Ephesians 5:3-4 and Hebrews 13:4).

Job made a “covenant with his eyes” (Job 31:1). He committed not to look (or think) upon another woman with evil intentions. To protect your marriage, you must protect your eyes. If you see it on television, change the channel. If you see it in a magazine, turn the page. If it appears on your computer, quickly delete it. Again, guard your eyes and mind, and you will guard your heart. You may think you can handle it, but you are wrong. God gives one answer – **FLEE** – “Flee youthful lusts” (I Timothy 2:22).

Thoughtfulness

Much of the time, men are often careless about thoughtfulness. The problem is that you drop your guard, and fall into free and easy habits at home. In the shop, or on the street, you are exceedingly careful. You are polite and attentive. You are careful not to injure the feelings of a lady at your work place, but when you reach home, you give vent all of the problems and talk that has been suppressed all day. You can be cutting, short and blunt in your remarks. Questions are answered impatiently and rudely in an irritated tone of voice. You think that because a woman is your wife, she should know that you love her, even if we are rude to her. You think she should not mind anything you do or say, even if it is something

that would greatly offend other women. However, you forget she has feelings, and she to, may have had a rough day.

Another great mistake made in the home is that you don't put your greatest efforts forth in the matter of kindness and patience. There are men who do not say anything mean, or cutting in the home, but it must be confessed that they say few tender, loving things. Their speech is short, crisp and businesslike. The warmth of the lover and the newlywed husband has strangely disappeared. The promises to "love and cherish" have soon been forgotten. How shortsighted a policy this is! Spoken love needs to be cultivated as well as any other kind of love, and if it is not fed, it will die.

There are times when a man should be especially sensitive and thoughtful toward his wife. A child may have been sick all day or he may have distressed her by his disobedience; the household work has been upset and delayed, and the whole day has been full of unusually trying cares. She may be hurting and lonely, and if her husband has tenderness and will show it, then memories of the day will quickly wipe away. It takes so little thoughtfulness to erase the battles of the day and restore joy to the heart.

Counsel

It is taken for granted that if a man feels a woman is worthy of being his wife, he looks upon her as being a mature, intelligent person. Yet after marriage, some men treat their wives like they are on the same mental level as the children. They never share with them about their business, or their battles of the day. Now a woman doesn't know everything about business, but she can be a great counselor, sometimes seeing the bigger picture. The woman referred to in Proverbs 31 reveals that it is wise for a husband to seek his wife's advice. She may not carry the details of it in her head as her husband does, but the fact is that a woman's quick intuition will often leap to a correct point, while a man's logic is slow in arriving. Then the very fact that she is more, or less, removed from the immediate problem involved will often make her judgment clearer and more accurate. It is a wise man who seeks his wife's counsel in the matters of his business. Many men can thank their wife's judgement for a large share of their fortune.

Big-Heartedness

The head and the heart must be in sync. Heaven deliver us from the man who is a "nobody" at work and a petty tyrant in his home. He loves to stand on the hearth and be the dominating, tyrannical bully of the family circle, bawling out commands and threats to his wife and children like some wild animal. Of all the contemptible people, this man is the worst. This is a total violation of what God intended men to be to their wives. This type of person has no concept of what "Husbands, love your wives" means.

Surrender to Christ

May this thought be burned upon your heart. There are men who are tender toward their wives. They provide every needful thing for their comfort. They are thoughtful and big-hearted. They counsel with them and are kind toward them, but when it comes to spiritual matters, they draw back and take no part in worshipping with them. They shut themselves out of the deepest and most sacred part of a wife's life. Alone she goes to church. Alone she sits at the Lord's Supper. Alone she falls to her knees in prayer. Alone she bears the hopes, trials and aspirations of her soul. Alone she wants her husband, more than anyone in the world, to come to Jesus Christ and make him his Lord and Savior. He has no part with her in all of this. "And if a house is divided against itself that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:25).

He denies the very vows he made at the marriage altar. God made us body, soul and spirit. To deny the spiritual part of this sacred relationship is to be blind to the most important part of this union. We could say to each wife that maybe in this situation that such a marriage is not a marriage as God intended it to be! Only His grace will see her through and she can claim the promise that her consistent testimony may be the result of his salvation. "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the Word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior" (I Peter 3:1 NASB).

If together you are not one in soul and spirit then this marriage is not the way God intended it to be. Such action on the part of a husband is utterly wrong and reprehensible, and God will bring him into judgement to answer for it. It is a great wrong to the Christian wife and family, and the consequence of his actions will be revealed at the Judgement seat.

Hearts are to be united in eternal fellowship. The years here on earth are but times of preparation for a union that will endure beyond the valley of the shadows of death and last through all eternity. We believe many tears will be shed in heaven over failed marriages that God wanted to bless but could not. He will wipe away all tears, but we will have memories of what might have been. We pray that God will help a husband who is not in this right relationship to think upon these things and to surrender his life to his wife and his children, but more importantly to Jesus Christ, making Him Lord of his life.

If things are not right and you want to settle them, you can do it right now. If a friend knocked on the door of your house, you would open it and invite him in. Jesus knocks at the door of your heart, but it is up to you to open the door and invite Him in. He will only enter at your invitation. He will cleanse your heart and make it a place where you and He can have fellowship every day of your life. He says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice (that's you) and will open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

WIFE – THE HEART OF THE HOME

If you are a woman reading this and are trying to understand your role in marriage, please stop right here and open your Bible to Proverbs 31 (read and meditate on verses 10-31). This is a biblical passage that will help you understand your role in marriage. The following is given to help you build on this passage in a practical way, for your understanding of the beautiful relationship God initiated from “the beginning”.

I trust that every woman will understand her value to her future husband. Proverbs 31:10 says that your price to your husband is far above rubies. When a man asks you to be his wife, you have been chosen above all the women on earth. This brings responsibility and opportunity, which the angels of heaven might well covet. She holds in her hands the destiny and the earthly usefulness to her husband and children more fully than she often realizes. You will be – more than anyone or anything – the greatest impact in the future on your husband, children and home. Much of their development and destiny is in your hands. It is often said, “children are a product of the home”. Both parents make their mark in the home, but because of the time and teaching a mother invests in molding the children’s habits, character and thinking, her influence makes a much greater impact (Proverbs 31:28).

The word “Wife” means “weaver”. She is the one that weaves the home into the design and beauty it is intended to be. All of the threads must complement each other, and rely on each other, to express the will of the weaver. A home woven by a Christian wife will express the grace and beauty that reveals the work of the Holy Spirit in all the daily activities. It will be clearly reflective in the lives of her children and her husband. “Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her, saying, “Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all”. (Proverbs 31:29 NASB)

The home is their palace. Like the Lord Jesus Christ is head of the church and the Holy Spirit is the Ever Present One guiding, influencing, directing, teaching and enforcing rules laid down in the Word, so the wife is like the Holy Spirit in the home. Her influence in all that goes on in the home is just like the work of the Holy Spirit in the church. She leads, teaches, comforts, encourages, gives and understands in order to build her husband and children up in the Faith.

The description of a good wife, which was given by a writer of years past, is “A good wife is Heaven’s last best gift to man, his angel and minister of graces innumerable, his gem of many virtues. Her voice is his sweetest music, her smile his brightest day. Her kiss the guardian of his innocence, her arms the pale of his safety; her industry is his surest wealth. Her economy his safest steward; her lips are his safest counselor, her bosom is the softest pillow of his cares, and her prayer the ablest advocate of Heaven’s blessing upon his head.”

If the above is the ideal wife, maybe questions should be asked before entering into marriage with a man. Because a wife is the heart of the home, a woman should ask herself if she could be all that is required of her to be a godly wife. What kind of woman will you have

to be in order to become a good and true wife? Is this the life you desire? Here are some of those requirements to consider in bringing about the fulfillment of God's design for the wife in a Christian marriage.

Partnership

I use the word in its larger sense. Read again the description of a good woman in Proverbs. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." He knows that she is his most wonderful friend and partner, and she is his alone. He knows that she is true to all of his interests and intents; he must show the same for her. She is thoughtful about his needs and plans for the future. She can stand by his side and enhance his dreams. No one can meet his needs and expand his vision, goals, his future and commitments as well as the beautiful wife he married.

Maintaining the Home

It is true that with certain jobs, men and women are equal, but today we find that men and women are in competition for jobs in the marketplace. We should ask ourselves what is the real motivation for this employment? It may be power, money, ego, acceptance, recognition, rights, materialism or many other things, not all of which are right or wrong. They convince themselves that if they go to work for awhile, the increase in income will allow them to have things they need like a better house, a newer car, private education and the list is endless. However, surveys show that when this happens, a couple never quite reaches the standard of living they dreamed of because it advances as their income increases. Once a couple sets their standard of living, based on two incomes, seldom do they return to only one income. By this stage, both have lost sight of clear biblical teaching.

From a biblical viewpoint, is this really God's intent for a woman, especially while there are children in the home? The Bible says that older women are to "encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands that the Word of God may not be dishonored" (Titus 2:5 NASB).

If the home has priority in our lives as God intended it to have, then the order of the home must be in line with what the Bible teaches. God intended for the wife to find her fulfillment in maintaining the home and children by keeping the house, loving the children and making the home a haven for her family. If she cannot keep house, and cannot learn, or will not, she must get someone who will do it for her. A neat, well-kept house is absolutely indispensable to happy married life.

This may sound unromantic to a young couple, but that doesn't make it any less true. Many happy marriages have been destroyed by the hectic schedules of both people, especially when floors are not kept clean, meals are not prepared, children are not cared for and odds and ends are not picked up and put into their proper places. The husband comes home from work

where organization is mandatory for the success of the business. Each person is required to maintain orderliness and efficiency in their work. If this is important in the market place for success how much more is it necessary for the home to be successful?

The husband may be a very patient man, but when he consistently comes home to a dirty, disorderly household where everything is where it should *not* be and nothing is where it should be, it quenches the atmosphere and kills the joy of the home. When things are cluttered and untidy, when things are dropped and left where they were last used instead of being put in their proper place, tension is created in the home and soon romance flies out the window.

If, as the wife, you want to keep the love relationship vibrant, make the home a haven of rest for him to escape the pressures of the marketplace, then put yourself in his shoes. How would you want things when you come home? Love and respect must be the cords that bind the relationship together. However proper maintaining of the home will set the atmosphere, whether it builds, or destroys the relationship. Like all relationships, it must have a foundation, and one of the important stones of this foundation is good housekeeping.

Mutual Communications

Communication must flow from each partner, sharing everything and anything. Between a husband and wife, no subject or incident is off-limits. At the same time, anything shared in confidence must be kept in confidence. If this is violated, it will severely damage a basic foundation of trust in the relationship. While she will give her confidence in full to her husband, hiding nothing from him and having no secrecy from him, she will be very careful about her talk concerning her home outside of her home.

At best, men are often dreadfully trying to their wife. He will have faults, which annoy her and sometimes cause her pain. He will fail in this duty or that. A wise wife will never speak of these things outside the home, nor in the home before the children. She will talk only to her husband and to her Savior about them. She may be constantly striving to correct these faults in her husband, but she should be patient, with love, keeping her problem in her own heart. Proverbs 31 is a special chapter in the Bible for the godly woman. Here is a verse to take to heart, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness"(verse 25).

Here, sometimes, a fatal mistake is often made. Wives foolishly and glibly chatter to one another about the failures of their respective husbands. Sometimes they even talk to other men about a matter, forgetful of the fact that love will overlook blemishes. The man to whom she is talking about her husband's faults may be wondering what that poor husband ever saw in a wife who would speak in such a manner, and so she only brings disrespect upon her own head. Guard your heart and your words as you speak to others about your family and home.

Personal Presentation – Physically and Spiritually

Today, in our world of advertising, beauty is sex appeal. Many women have bought into the world's idea of thinking that beauty will bring marriage, happiness and success, only to discover that it is not true. After the vows are taken and you begin to live together, the real person is revealed. Again, God puts it in perspective, "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" (Proverbs 31:30).

Someone has said, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder". Real beauty cannot be achieved by weight loss, stylish clothes, makeup or anything else that the world says you need to be beautiful. "And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the works of our hands establish thou it" (Psalm 90:17). Real and lasting beauty is not external, but internal. Have you ever met an elderly couple who are still madly in love? It is entirely possible for a wife to constantly increase in charm for her husband. The passing years may take the bloom from her cheeks, and the music out of her voice, but the arts of love and of grace in mind and soul may still make her altogether lovely in the eyes of her husband. To do this, however, she will avoid all that is offensive and be a wife who is constantly cultivating her own life with all that is lovely, womanly, gracious and godly.

So it all comes back to the matter of character - the real you. A good wife comes only by being a good woman, and a good woman comes only by being a Godly Christian woman. Married life lays great requirements upon both the husband and the wife. It is a strict discipline and therein lies much of its value. The duties of a wife are such that practically no woman, unless she is a Christian, can meet. Trials and perplexities, crosses and disappointments, sorrows and solitudes arise, and unless Christ is there in the heart, they are too great to be borne. Let us have Christ in our homes, and to every wife, let Him be your true and familiar friend.

CHAPTER 4

CHILDREN – THE FRUIT OF THE HOME

Charles Lamb said that there was nothing on earth that he would not give to be able to call back his departed mother, and on his knees, ask her forgiveness for every act that had grieved her gentle spirit. Surely, as the years advance, every thoughtful child has felt like this and has come to the realization of what his parents have done for him.

Let no one suppose that any child is too small to have a very real part in the making of a home. The wheels in my watch are small - some of them exceedingly so - but they are all important to the well being of that timepiece. A small child can be so ill tempered and fretful that he upsets the whole household or he can be so loving and thoughtful that he brings peace and cheer to the whole home.

Obedience

There are 3 things parents must do – Love, Discipline and Teach, but what are the duties of children in the home? What is their part?

The Bible does not say, “Children obey your parents when they are right”. It says, “Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right”... even if they are wrong (Eph. 6:1). Some would try to say that there is no record of the early life of our Savior. Only a few statements are recorded about his early life, but they are revealing. There are no more beautiful words than those which say of Him, “He went down to Nazareth, and was subject unto them” (that is, unto His mother and foster-father). And who was Jesus? Who was this Child who obeyed? He was the eternal Son of God. He was the creator of the entire universe, “for by him were all things made and without him was not anything made that was made.” He was the Lord and Master of all the hosts of heaven. What a lesson in obedience!

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Many young people get the idea that to obey and to be subject unto their parents is a humiliation, a kind of self-imposed restriction, which will limit them. Did it have that effect upon Jesus? We know it didn't. A young life won't be hampered or led astray by following carefully the advice of earnest Christian parents. No young person was ever stunted, curbed or injured by obeying the implicit instructions of godly parents. Jesus obeyed his earthly parents until He was thirty years old - until He left that home to take up His God appointed work.

The obedience is to be absolute; it is to include those things, which are pleasant as well as, unpleasant. Only one key qualification is mentioned, “in the Lord”. Children are to obey, “in the Lord”. A Christian parent may require something that may seem wrong, but the child must obey. “Children, obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord”. (Col. 3:20) However, we must remember parents are fallible. No human authority, of any kind of degree, is binding if it bids us break one of God's laws. If an ungodly parent demands a child to disobey the Word of God, the consequence will fall on the parent, not the child. The Bible says, “and whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe on me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea” (Mark 9:42).

Love and Respect of Parents

In all of this, we are taking for granted that parents keep before them the injunction which follows “children obey your parents in the Lord,” which is “parents, provoke not your children to wrath”. The relationship is decidedly two-sided. For an unsaved parent to demand that his children deny the Lord will bring about consequences on the parent and the children.

I know of no word that needs more greatly to be said to some of our young people than this. There is a young girl who is ashamed of her mother. She sees that her mother's beauty has faded; her dress is not as fine as it might be; her hands are red and toil-worn. The

young girl is ashamed of her mother and does not care to have her meet with her young friends who come to the house. Or the shame is directed toward the father, whose bent shoulders, tanned and weather-beaten face and crippled hands speak eloquently of years of toil and hardship that he endured so his children might have a better opportunity in life than he had. The young girl, or a young man may be ashamed to have their young friends with their fancy clothes and stylish dresses see the “old man”.

These are not cases drawn out of our imagination. We all know of many such cases. Do you not know that those marks of toil, age, care, and deprivation are marks that speak eloquently of love for you? Your mother and father received those marks in pouring out their very life's blood for you.

Would you be ashamed of a man who only had one eye, having lost one in defense of your life? Well, your father and mother have done more than save your life. They have had broken nights and anxious days. They have cared for you in sickness. They did not consider their own comfort and pleasure, but rather denied themselves the necessities of life that you might have some luxuries. They rose early and toiled late that you might have the opportunity to study and prepare yourself for a great work in the world. That's where those scars came from, and holy, sacred scars they are – and you are ashamed of them?

A merchant in one of our Midwest towns sent his boy to college. He had to mortgage his business in order to do so. He skimped and saved, and both he and his wife went without proper clothing in order that their son might take his place among the other students properly clothed and provided with money. After the lapse of a few months, there came into the hearts of the old couple an uncontrollable longing to see their son. They hitched the old horse to the rickety spring wagon (they would have had a car had they not given the money to their son.) and set out for the college town, twenty miles away. They arrived just as classes were letting out, and saw their boy, Harry, with a group of friends coming across the campus. As they approached him, some of his companions called out in ridicule at the old wagon and horse and the quaint clothing of the old man and his wife. Harry stopped, looked intently for a moment at his mother and father, blushed deeply and quickly turned aside and hurried off, pretending not to know them. Heartbroken, the old couple started the weary journey home, and that night the old mother died.

If these words fall into the hands of any girl or boy who is tempted to act as Harry acted, I plead with you, do not do so. If your mother and father – both, or either of them - are living, go to them, throw your arms about their necks and tell them that you love them and appreciate all that they have done for you. If they are not within reach of your arms, write them at once! Write them a long letter of love, cheer and appreciation.

A child never becomes so old that he or she is not a child to his parents. Therefore, this love and respect is to be paid to them as long as they live. Life has few things more beautiful than the devoted thought and love of a grown son or daughter to an aged parent. Such is very pleasing to the heart of God.

When our parents grow old, they exchange places with us. Once they nursed us, now it is our privilege and high honor to nurse them. Once they took the storm and protected us. Now we must take the storm and protect them. We are strong now, and they are feeble. What an opportunity to lovingly repay a part of this debt! It will only be in part, however. No child can ever fully repay the love and care of a godly parent.

Life has fewer satisfactions more intense than the thought that one has been true, kind and gentle to one's parents in their time of need and dependence. It gives peace to the soul and makes heaven and reunion more glorious in anticipation. To be able to say "good-bye" to a parent with no regrets of lost opportunities is a blessing indeed.

CHAPTER 5

CHILDREN IN THE HOME – Building Bonds

"Children are a heritage from the Lord" (Psalms 127:3). Nothing is more thrilling than to look upon a newborn baby, which God has entrusted to you. It is an awesome responsibility that God has placed in your hands as husband and wife. This is a person you will teach and mold by example. Nothing is more wonderful than to hear them laughing, singing, and sometimes crying as they learn the joys and lessons of life. Studies have revealed that 85% percent of the influence on a child's life comes from the home. They will be what your home is. They will be introduced to God and His word, both by your teaching and by your lifestyle. Most likely their physical and eternal destiny lies in your hands. Throughout your life, they must be at the top of your daily prayer list.

There are also heartaches because children have a will. They may make choices that are clearly wrong. It may break your heart. However, should they go astray, remember the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-24. Surely the father spent many sleepless nights praying and wondering about his boy. He was always looking down the road for his son to return to his house. When he returned, forgiveness was in the heart of his father who would not even let his son finish telling how sorry he was. That is the heart of a true Christian parent.

The story is told of a man who tore down one of his farm buildings that stood for more than twenty years. It left a bare, unattractive spot, but as April came and the sun and rain fell upon the place where the building had stood, the owner was surprised to find innumerable flowers springing up. These seeds had evidently been there all the time, but lack of rain and sun had prevented their growth and blossom. Many homes have in them just such possibilities of undeveloped beauty.

Affection and Oneness

We had a policy in our home that the children could ask any question, at any time, they wanted to. In fact, we encouraged them to share anything, and they had a right to disagree with things that we said. However, we always had this policy, "Everything is debatable, but not always negotiable". As my children grew older, these times led to great biblical discussions. We knew this was making them think! It was confirming to them what we believed and what the Bible taught. We always had a policy with our children that if they wanted to talk, we were ready to talk. Often at bedtime they had a question, maybe not that they really wanted an answer, but rather did not want to go to sleep. However, we always used this time, because if they were interested in talking, we were interested in listening.

One of the greatest failures in homes is that parents do not communicate with their children. Too often, brothers and sisters go outside the home and seek advice from their closest friends. Sometimes they ask questions that are not being answered at home, or are afraid to ask in the home. The friend may not be one's brother or sister, but a neighborhood boy or girl who may give wrong answers. The reason for this may be obvious. Often the family life, by its very character of close and almost constant association, may tend to lose a bit of its interest and freshness. Children must understand that their best friends are their own sisters and brothers. Friends come and go, but family is forever. We can be assured that no matter how close a relationship is between friends outside the home, that they can never be as true and close of the relationships between brothers and sisters. "Blood is thicker than water," runs the old proverb. Many parents may think that family love and affection is a kind of instinct and does not need development. Nothing could be further from the truth. The parents must openly demonstrate it. The same process of sacrifice, discipline, unselfishness and loving consideration of others knits hearts to hearts in the home. Just because hearts are knitted together does not mean they will necessarily be loving hearts, unless there is a demonstration and example clearly taught and lived in the home. Hearing the words of the father and mother saying, "I'm sorry," "Forgive me," and "I love you" are lessons they will never forget.

A Brother Should Be a Guard and Defender to His Sister

The story of Charles and Mary Lamb is a familiar story that has often been told. In a sudden fit of insanity, the sister took the life of her own mother. From that time on, she was subject to recurring fits of violent insanity. There were premonitory symptoms, and when these were discerned, Charles and Mary would go, hand in hand, to the asylum, where for a time, she must be confined. One of their friends tells how he suddenly came upon Charles and Mary who were weeping bitterly as they walked hand in hand down the little woodland path to the madhouse. This was a trial that Charles Lamb bore, not for one or two years, but for thirty-five years - all of the time in love and patience. Yes! a brother is to be the protector of his sister!

There is another way in which he will protect her. Every young man knows the young men who are impure and wicked. He will not stand by and see such a young man become the companion of his pure sister. He will, if he is a true brother, warn her of the other man's

character. A sister will do well to heed and seek a brother's counsel about the men with whom she would form close friendships. Likewise, a brother will do well to talk confidentially and frankly with his sister about the young women with whom he is considering dating. Girls know girls and boys know boys. A sister will know if a girl is true and worthy of her brother's consideration or if she is covering up her true character in a female seduction of him. A true sister will know and tell her brother these things, and the brother will do likewise for his sister.

A Sister & Brother Will Be an Inspiration of Purity and Virtue to Each Other

The greatest challenge a young man or woman faces today is keeping them selves pure. They hear, "everyone is doing it". That is a lie! Let's suppose we say everyone is taking drugs. Does that make it right. No! A pure, moral life is hard for every young man and women to keep, however, it is a choice they must make. There is pressure on every side to yield. God says, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:13).

Temptations tests a young man, often more subtly and powerfully than it does a young woman. However, a great verse to memorize is I Corinthians 10:13. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Every sister has an opportunity to be helpful here! She can be an example in actions and attitude, so pure and sweetly attractive, that the memory of her character will go with her brother out into the world and serve him as a shield of defense. When evil tempts him, the thoughts of his sister will rise up as an example before him, bringing sheer disgust and loathing for the temptress. Surely it would seem to be worthwhile for every girl to seek to have this abiding influence in her brother's life. She can make virtue so attractive that he will always be repelled by vice. She could have no higher compliment than for a brother to say that he wants to marry someone with character like his sister. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies" (Proverbs 31:10).

Every brother should set before his sister the example of fine, clean, noble manhood. His character and language, along with his Christian testimony, should be a clear guideline as to the standard that she is looking for in a man. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45). Therefore, his example will guide her when she chooses a husband. Because of the life and character of her brother, her ideals will be so high that none but the most worthy may hope to win her; so will she be safeguarded.

The word "safeguard" is greatly needed today. Standards in many places such as on television, magazines and the Internet are riddled with pornography. Many other public

venues are disastrously low in regard to moral things. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8). Many girls fail to realize their great opportunity and responsibility. A nation never rises any higher than its women, and men are only as good as women compel them to be. We don’t want to put an undue weight of responsibility upon the shoulders of women, however, the fact is that sisters in the home and women in general hold in their hands the destinies of their brothers and other young men far more than they often realize.

Brothers and sisters should preserve their mutual love and attachment through the years. It is easy to drift apart. Change of residence from one part of the country to another, together with the growth of families and diverging interests and responsibilities make it difficult to keep their ties close, warm and firm. However, it can be done. We have means of instant communications like no other time in history, emails, phones and instant messaging. If there is a question, either should feel free to ask for counsel. It should be done; and in many Christian families it is being done. Brothers and sisters, with their common heritage, their mutual blessings and memories of home should bond together. The family is a God-ordained unit and will stand not only through this world, but also through all eternity. Let us then live with a sense of responsibility and love with mutual patience and helpfulness, that we may be better prepared for the life there.

If your family ties have become lax, if coldness and indifference, or misunderstanding and criticism, have crept into your relationships that were once close and, I strongly admonish you to do what you can to restore the relationship. A phone call, written letter or email may be the first step toward the restoration of the old ties. Think about this.

CHAPTER 6

THE MEMORIES OF HOME

As we live each day, we are making memories. Every day adds to them and determines more fully their final character. Often, we sit for hours with our children and grandchildren, talking about our home and reflecting on the past. When we are together, we laugh, cry and praise the Lord for the great home He has given us. Inevitably, someone says, “Do you remember when?” Part of the sorrow and suffering of Christ here upon the earth is to be accounted for by the fact that He was away from His Father’s home. He liked the children of men, but He missed the glory and joy He had in His Father’s house. This must be a part of what Heaven will be like. We are constantly making memories, and the process of making them determines the way in which we live. Our memories will make old age happy or unhappy. That is what memories do! Our fondest memories should be of our daily life in our Christian home, both our memories and those of our children.

Memories of the home should include the meal times, prayer times and game times that we shared. The trips that we took, the animals we raised and the fun and battles that we

encountered. Often there were conflicts, and we shared them as well. As a family, we make memories every day of the week, for you never know when you are making the last of them. Life is so uncertain that we never know when we are having the last meal, last talk or the last walk together. I know of a family who ends every phone conversation, email, note and parting of company with "Love you". Never leave the house in the morning if there has been a misunderstanding, bitter or ugly words, or sullen silence because those things may become a lifelong bitter memory. The best defense to the home is those eight special words we mentioned at the beginning, "I'm sorry," "Forgive me," and "I love you". "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" ("Proverbs 15:1).

The story is told of a young man with a kind and gentle nature who left his home to go to his job. He had not been gone an hour when his body was brought home. The scaffold upon which he was working had given way, and he had been killed. One of his sisters was more grief-stricken than the others. She seemed to have a peculiar sorrow. She could only say, "I wasn't kind to him as he left this morning."

Memories! When made, they are eternal and cannot be changed!

Children Have Memories Too

Having traveled to many large cities and watched the great crowds of people moving up and down the streets, in and out of large buildings, I have grown accustomed to watching people rush in every direction. Each time I am reminded that every one of them bears in their heart and life the impression of the home from which they came.

What kind of memories will your children have of home? Will they be memories of parents that loved the Lord Jesus Christ and continually sought the Bible as direction for their lives? Will there be memories of comfort, inspiration, encouragement and blessings, or will there be memories that sear, burn, bite and curse? We should face the matter squarely, being fully assured that the children we send out into the world will never fully escape from the memories and influence of the home. If the childhood home has been true and sweet, its benediction goes through all of life.

"Sin may sweep over the soul like a devastating fire; sorrow may quench every joy and hope; but the memory of a sweet and blessed home lives on like a solitary star burning in the deep of night. And even in the midst of sin, its picture floats before the mind like a vanishing dream."

Here is the testimony of one man: "Many a night I remember lying quietly in the little upper chamber before sleep came. There would come a gentle footstep on the stair, the door would noiselessly open and a well-known form, softly gliding through the darkness, would appear at my bedside. First, there would be a few pleasant inquiries of affection, which gradually deepened into words of counsel. Then kneeling, her head close to mine, her most earnest hopes and prayers would flow forth in prayer. How largely a mother can wish for her

boy! Her tears spoke the earnestness of her desire. I seem to feel them yet where sometimes they fell upon my face. Rising, with a goodnight kiss, she was gone.”

A memory like that is the greatest gift a parent can leave a child. It will be a bulwark to guard against temptation and sin. It will prove a golden chain binding the child to the feet of God. Is it worthwhile to fill a child’s life with memories like that? How careless we parents can be! How slothful, how negligent! God forgive and help us!

Sometimes, sorrow is not taken properly. If a home is a truly Christian home, sorrow does not put out all of the lights. It rather makes the home more tender and loving. It draws the home closer to God. Sanctified sorrow transfigures a home, and brings more of God down into it. So it often happens that the memory of sorrow proves to be the most tender and firmest clasp that binds home and hearts together.

As we close this, there are some things that we must never forget. We must have Christ in our homes if our memories are to be all that they should be. There should be a family altar where at some time each day all of the family gathers to hear God’s words and to pray together. In this 21st century we are quickly moving through this world. Soon all that remains will be the memory of our lives. The strongest foundation that will give stability, direction and purpose in our lives is a Christian Home (I Cor. 3:11-13).

A beautiful story is told of Mozart. His last musical composition was his Requiem. After days of illness and the most painful labor, it was finished. His beautiful daughter Emily came into the room just as he was writing in the last notes, and Mozart handed to her the manuscript, saying, “There, my beautiful Emily, it is finished; my Requiem is finished, and I too, am finished.”

“Say not so, dear father,” said the gentle Emily, “you seem stronger today.”

“I shall never be well again,” replied her father, “but here, Emily, sit at the piano and play these notes and sing them with the hymns of the sainted mother.”

Emily obeyed, singing with a voice made rich by the tender emotion.

Then, when she had finished, she turned from the piano, expecting the approving smile of her father; but she saw only the look of peace on his features and the seal of death. He had gone home on the wings of his own requiem.

Listen when I say, there will be no requiem so sweet to the heart in the last hour of earthly life as the requiem of blessed and hallowed home memories. It will make music in the heart sweeter than the song of angels. May God help us to live at home so sweetly. One of the best rewards will be our children, grandchildren and future generations that followed our example as we built a Christian home where Jesus Christ was the continuously invited guest and His precious Word was our standard and guide. Let’s make home a place where “Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:19).

Let our goals be evident of this fact. The nearest thing to heaven is a Christian Home!