

Department of
Philosophy and Missions

IS YOUR HOME SCRIPTURAL?

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Overlooked in this generation especially has been a key to the accomplishing of many phases of the Lord's work. The key is the importance of the Christian home. It fits in the doors of evangelism, revival, godly living, church work, and missionary zeal, but only on one condition—that the home be scriptural in every way. A Christian home functioning according to the detailed principles of God's Word can and should be vitally related to all phases of the Lord's work. Too long has the church overlooked this.

The Word of God has nothing to say about organizing a Sunday school, a Youth for Christ or Young Life group, a Christian day school or college, or about publishing Christian books or magazines; yet no one denies the importance of these means in accomplishing the Lord's work, and no one considers them unscriptural in any sense. But the Word of God has much to say about organizing and running a Christian home. When will Christians realize the importance of obeying this part of God's revelation to us, not only for what it would mean to our homes but also for what it would mean to all aspects of God's work in the earth?

Teaching for several years in a Christian college has confirmed the writer's opinion that many of the major problems that Christian workers and workers face with their young people (who are undoubtedly saved) stem from the Christian homes in which they were reared, but not reared according to the detailed and extremely plain and specific revelation of God's Word. What about your home? Is it scriptural?

God's plan for the home is very plain. Although the Scripture does deal with homes in which there are un-

saved adult members, we limit this present investigation to the passages which assume that the adult members of the home are born-again believers.

I. THE PLACE OF THE PERSONS IN THE CHRISTIAN HOME

The normal Christian home consists of husband, wife, and children, each with his or her own particular place and responsibility. The husband is the head of the home (Eph. 5:23). This means that the intelligent direction of the affairs of the home is his responsibility. This corresponds to our Lord's relation as Head of His church. Decisions concerning the Lord's will belong ultimately in the realm of the husband's authority; and although he may be guided along *with* his wife, he should not be guided *by* her.

But in order to guard against abuse of this authority, God has ordained that in addition to being the leader in the home the husband is to be the lover (Eph. 5:25). The quality of that love is divine—as Christ loved the church. The expression of that love is to be nourishing and cherishing the family (Eph. 5:29). The word *nourish* means to bring to maturity (cf. 1 Cor. 14:35), and the word *cherish* means to warm and in this case to warm with the truth of the Word of God. Indeed this, and only this, is real love; for love is that which seeks the highest good for the one loved, and there is nothing higher than glorifying God. Therefore, the expression of real love is the seeking to bring the loved one into a mature Christian experience, that that one may fully glorify God. This is the special ministry of the husband.

The wife's position in the home is one of subjection (Eph. 5:2) unless, of course, she be a widow. There are two reasons for this: first, the natural constitution of the race (Adam created before Eve) demonstrates the superiority of the man; and second, the spiritual constitution of the church (itself subject to Christ as the woman is to the man). This obedience is to be in *all things*. This is not a popular doctrine in these days when the cry is for liberation and equality; and although Christianity as no other religion gives freedom to women, in the Christian home this freedom is distinctly

regulated. The trends of the world must not govern the conduct of the believer.

The position of the children is also one of obedience (Eph. 6:1), which word literally means a readiness to hear what the parents say. "In the Lord" restricts the obedience so that it shall not compromise Christian standards, for our Lord Himself taught that there might be cases when children shall be required to forsake parents for His sake (Lk. 18:29).

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE CHRISTIAN HOME

The Scripture is very plain that the purpose of the Christian home is the bringing of children into the world and properly rearing them. The very name Adam gave his wife shows that he believed that she would bear him children (Gen. 3:20). After the judgment of the flood, God's command was "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 9:1). When God called Abraham He promised him a seed as the stars of the heaven (Gen. 15:5). During the period of the Mosaic law it was the family that was the central unit in that economy. In the millennial kingdom children are mentioned again as a blessing of that age (Zech. 8:5). In this present time the Word assumes the presence of children in the family. Indeed, there is no reference to family life which does not include children (1 Cor. 7; 1 Tim. 3, 5; Titus 1). Modern theories notwithstanding, the Word of God encourages marriage and the establishing of the home for the purpose that God might bless that home with children. The Psalmist's words are still true today: "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Psa. 127:3-5a).

III. PROCEDURE IN THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Three factors are involved in proper procedure for the conduct of the Christian home. First and basic to the others is recognizing that someone has to preside over the home. This of course is the duty of the husband, who is to be the

presiding officer of the home (cf. 1 Tim. 3:4 where the word *rule* literally means to stand before, hence the idea of presiding). This is basic to proper scriptural procedure.

The second factor has to do with providing for things essential to the home. The husband is to provide for the physical and material things of the household (1 Tim. 5:8). The word *provide* here means literally to have forethought and indicates that the husband shall have foresight in his plans for his home. Wives also have something particular to provide. They are "to be sober, to love their own husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers (literally, *workers*) at home, good, obedient to their own husbands that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:4-5). A. T. Robertson aptly comments on this exhortation with these words: "This exhortation is still needed where some married women prefer poodle dogs to children." It is especially important also to note that a scripturally patterned home will provide sufficient work for the wife to do. As soon as a girl marries, no matter what be her outstanding abilities or talents, she automatically assumes new and different responsibilities which have priority over all else and which are beyond question the Lord's will for her.

The third factor has to do with the purpose of proper presiding and providing, and that is, promoting the growth of the children of the home. This, as we have shown, is the purpose for which God has ordained the home. The Scriptures are very clear on proper procedure at this point, declaring "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Notice, incidentally, that the direct address of this verse is to the fathers, not because mothers are not involved in promoting the growth and discipline of their children but because the governing of the home rests primarily with the presiding officer, the father.

The words, *nurture* and *admonition*, describe this procedure. The Greek word παιδεία, *nurture*, means education by discipline (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 12:5, 7, 11). The Greek

¹Word Pictures in the New Testament, IV, 602-3.

Biblically based

scholar Archbishop Trench points out that this word is "one among the many words, into which revealed religion has put a deeper meaning. . . . For the Greek, παιδεία was simply 'education'. . . . But the deeper apprehension of those who had learned that 'foolishness is bound in the heart' alike 'of a child' and of a man, while yet 'the rod of correction may drive it far from him' (Prov. xxii. 15), led them, in assuming the word, to bring into it a further thought. They felt and understood that all effectual instruction for the sinful children of men, includes and implies chastening, or as we are accustomed to say, out of a sense of the same truth, 'correction.'"² Cf. Proverbs 13:24; 22:6; 23:13; 29:15. To any Christian who declares that child training by this principle of physical punishment is out-of-date, an unsaved man has the right to say that salvation by the blood of Christ is also out-of-date. It is a very serious thing to tamper with these clear principles of the Word of God.

Trench's excellent words not only clarify the meaning of nurture, but they also draw our attention to the fact that it is *revealed* religion which gave the word this meaning. Christians must remember that, since these are revealed principles, they must be obeyed regardless of the modern theories and findings of men. As long as natural psychology and progressive education refuse to recognize the biblical teaching of the total depravity of every person born into this world, their guiding principles cannot be safe. There is a natural psychology and there is a biblical psychology. There is truth in natural psychology and there is also a great deal of error. The Christian homemaker must be very careful to examine every principle of natural psychology he may intend to use, in the light of the revealed truth in the Word of God. The Christian parent who refuses to train his children with the rod of correction not only sins against God and his children, but ultimately against all society.

While nurture means education by discipline, admonition means training by word (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11; Titus 3:10).

²*Synonyms of the New Testament*, p. 111.

Concerning the Greek word *νουθεσία*, *admonition* Trench declares: "It is the training by word—by the word of encouragement, when this is sufficient, but also by that of remonstrance, of reproof, of blame, where these may be required. . . . Relatively, then, and by comparison with 'paideia,' 'nouthesia' is the milder term; while yet its association with 'paideia' teaches that this too is a most needful element of Christian education; that the 'paideia' without it would be very incomplete; even as, when years advance, and there is no longer a child, but a young man, to deal with, it must give place to, or rather be swallowed up in, the 'nouthesia' altogether. And yet the 'nouthesia' itself, where need is, will be earnest and severe enough . . ."³

But whether by act or word all of this discipline must be the Lord's and not the parents', and it should be directed toward promoting the growth of the child. A home presided over by the father, provided with the things necessary, and promoting the growth of the children by act and word, is a home carrying out God's pattern in the Word.

IV. THE PRODUCT OF THE CHRISTIAN HOME

The product of the Christian home is the child, who is characterized in at least four ways. First, he should be a governed child (1 Tim. 3:4). Subjection means just that. The parents are to govern the child and not vice versa, as is so often the case today. This proper subjection on the part of the child is the mark of a Christian home.

Second, he should be a grave child (1 Tim. 3:4; Titus 1:6). Simply stated, the word means reverent modesty. This is the manifestation of a well-governed child and is to apply both at home and away from home, for the Titus reference has to do with the child's conduct in public. May we suggest, too, from the contexts of these references that rulers of the house of God could well afford to instill some of this reverent modesty into the congregations over which God has made them overseers? It is a dangerous thing to flatter, exploit, and push to the front young people, as many Christian

³*Ibid.*, p. 113.

leaders are doing today. It is no wonder that homes are not producing modest young people, when Christian leaders seem to have lost sight of this godly quality.

Third, he should be a grateful child (1 Tim. 5:4). The specific case here concerns the children and grandchildren of a widow who are instructed to requite, that is, to give back, to their parents. The principle applies in any Christian home, and the Scriptures do not say that any government benefit or security plan substitutes for the expression of grateful children.

Fourth, he should be a godly child (1 Tim. 5:4). The word *piety* means just that, godliness. This is the very heart of all the teaching concerning the home, for all these matters which have been discussed are simply means to this end product, the godly child. This supposes of course that he shall be led to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as his own Saviour. It supposes that he shall come early in life to this definite act of committal of his life to his Lord, and shall follow that with a life of constant obedience. And who can better bring a child to this knowledge than his parents, who live with him day after day? The Sunday school, church, youth organizations all help and play their part, but too long have we overlooked this primary, God-ordained means of evangelizing, of strengthening the church, of revival—in short, of the fulfillment of all of God's purpose, the Christian home. Is your home scriptural?

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