

THE HOME - A MISSION STATION

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Psalm 127:1

It is a good time to think about the home. It is the most important institution in any community and our prized values are definitely dependent upon it.

The home is under a heavy strain today. Evil and secular influences are working on its life from every side like termites so that either a home or a Christian hom is realized with difficulty. Certainly it is a good time for Christian people to think and to act courageously.

The welfare of the home is the welfare of society. The home is the fountain to which may be traced whatever is wrong in the nation or in the individual. If the fountain is impure, the stream must be impure. Society is just as good or just as bad as the home life of the people.

The home life is being severely tested at this time. There are multiplied forces at work that make it increasingly difficult to maintain an ideal home life. The high tension under which we move leaves little time for the cultivation of family life. Crowded conditions are not conducive to the development of the highest ideals in the family. The exit of women from the home for commercial, industrial, and political activities has cut deeply into the family life of America. The modern revolt of youth, with its attendant demoralization constitutes one of the most difficult of all the problems that face the American family today. The fear of parents, and those entrusted with their leadership, concerning youth is the most discouraging single factor with which we have to deal. No other institution in America is face to face with more serious problems than the home.

There is a divine ideal for the home. Marriage is of divine origin. It is the union of one man and one woman as a result of a divine act. Matthew Henry says that woman was not taken from man's head to rule him, but from his side, near his heart, to be loved and cherished by him. The creation story shows the physical, intellectual, and spiritual affinity that exists between men and women. Recognizing this affinity God said: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Paul brings this idea before us when he commands: "husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." Nothing could be more beautiful than the love that Christ has for His church.

We must see the home life as it is, if we are to have any share in making our homes what they should be. The colonial home is closed. It may not have been ideal. Its birth rate and its death rate were very large, but it produced men and women of sterling character who became nation builders and continent conquerors. Two characteristics of the colonial home were the large families and the variety of labor. Families were large, and their wants were simple and well within the range of limited means and experience. Priscilla Mullins and John Alden were not crazy for a radio, were not dying to attend the movie, nor green with envy at Mrs. Bradford's new cadillac. They cared more for a grand baby than they did for a baby grand. They were too busy to pine for the things they could not afford.

Specialization has removed many functions from the home until its unity is being endangered. A teacher made this observation: "When I was a young teacher, the church took care of the child's spirit, the home of his manners and morals, and the school of his intellect; but now the whole care of the child is dumped on the school even

to his eyes and teeth." In our day when poor parents work and rich parents play the school is being magnified at the expense of the home and of the child. School efficiency can never be a substitute for family efficiency and home opportunity.

We are constantly discovering in life that some things are essential and some are incidental. Much of our trouble comes from deeming the essentials to be incidentals and the incidentals to be essentials.

The first great essential in marriage is love. Therefore, marriage should be approached deliberately and with a sincere desire for the guidance of Him whose name is Love. Vital Christianity is also essential to lift a home to its highest level. One of the finest things in a house is an open fire place that radiates light, heat, and cheer to all that are in the house. One of the finest things in a home is that vital religion which radiates faith, hope, and love to all that are in the family. As the sun lightens the earth and makes it productive, so will Christ glorify, ennoble, and make happy any home in which He is made welcome.

Cooperation is also an essential in a happy home. No team ever moved a load by pulling time about, nor when one kicked while the other pulled. No institution is more dependent upon team work and sharing than is the home. The difference between a house and a home is created by attitudes, fellowship, habits, sharings, and any home can have these, and no money can purchase them.

What is the true significance of the Christian home? The answer may be summed up in the words of the old-fashioned wall-text--now sadly neglected--"Christ is the Head of this House, the Unseen Guest at every Table, the Silent Listener to every conversation."

Assuming that Christ is present in the home, there is a prevailing sense of harmony, not discord; peace, not strife; and sacrificial service through love, not fear. It is a home where parents live in confidence with each other, and children honour and respect father and mother, where God's Holy Word and God's Holy Day are reverently observed. A Christian home is the greatest heritage anyone can have; all other legacies are as nothing compared with this blessing.

To the child, the home is the first training-ground of life, the university where the foundation of ethics and morals is laid. It is here, at the mother's knee, that the tiny infant learns to lisp the name of Jesus, and as Christ grew in wisdom and stature with God and man, so does a child, under proper Christian influence, also develop into strong manhood or womanhood. It is common knowledge that childhood impressions are lasting, and memories of a happy Christian home can be, and have been, a guide through difficulties in later life, yes, even down to old age.

Our nation recognizes that the children are its greatest asset. It is to the boys and girls we look for future citizens--the men and women of tomorrow. How very essential it is that they should have every opportunity of moral and spiritual training! Godly homes and godly parents can best supply this.

In a Christian home the individual enjoys true fellowship with those among whom he lives. He is able to place trust in his fellows, whether at work or play. The happy satisfaction derived reminds me of the spirit of the Master when He visited that Christian home at Bethany, seeking the consolations and sympathy of Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

It is not only to the young that the Christian home is important. Where the Christian atmosphere pervades, the whole household feels the blessing. Comradeship and trust,

patience and tolerance with one another, and, in the words of the great apostle, "faith, hope and charity," are the noblest virtues found in the Christian home. In adults these have a far-reaching effect outside the family circle. They are like the rays of the sun, radiating joy and good will towards mankind.

There is something that the churches and all of us as Christians can do:

- (1) The church can instruct and guide young people into a true understanding of marriage and the home. The church should enter the home not at the point where the home breaks or begins to break but where the home begins. The church ought to precede the home by promoting standards for youth and by teaching and guiding them in the meaning and the opportunities of marriage. The schools also have a responsibility here. If, as we claim, it is our business to prepare people for life, we cannot neglect this important area of life.
- (2) We must say emphatically that the wedding ceremony is so important that it certainly deserves to be performed under religious influences.
- (3) All of us should dedicate ourselves to making our homes more Christian. Somehow we need the idea that the home, too, is a divine institution.

When the child enters the home it is a good time for the church to enter and assist the parents as they dedicate themselves to the responsibility that is theirs. In this and in other ways the parents, under the ministry of the church, can make the home Christian indeed.

An attractive home is not made so by expensive furniture alone. It is the presence of a certain spirit and warmth that makes a house a home. If the home is Christian, the furnishings are for use and not for show.

In what way is the home a mission station?

1. It is a place for unselfish love.

Love should reign supreme in the home. When it does, it is apparent even to the casual observers. Parents should love each other and exalt each other before the children. Children must be taught to love their parents and to love each other. Love attracts and helps.

2. It is a place where children should be taught to pray.
3. It is a place where children should be taught how to be saved.
4. It is a place where children should be taught to love the church.
5. It is a place where children should be taught the art of appreciation.
6. It is a place where children should be taught proper Christian attitudes.
7. It is a place to provide plenty of good reading matter.
8. It is a place to inspire in those who go out from our homes a desire for the best things in life.
9. It is a place for missionary emphasis.