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Churches of Christ

salute you



THE IDEAL HOME

HERALD OF TRUTH

The Ideal Home

James D. Willeford

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Several years ago Mr. Henry Grady was invited to Washington to write some articles on the Capitol of the United States. The story goes that he was taken to behold the beautiful new buildings, and to look at the Capitol from all four sides. Each time that he beheld a different side of the Capitol he would ask, "And this is the Capitol of the United States?" After this experience Mr. Grady returned home, and on his way he had to stay overnight in a small house with a poor family. After the evening meal, the father in that family said: "Mr. Grady, before we retire each night we read our Bible and pray. We would be glad to have you join us in this service if you will." He said he would be glad to, and he joined them in their family prayer. The next day Mr. Grady continued his journey, and after reaching his home, he wrote, "I have been to the Capitol of the United States, but it is not in Washington; it is in the American home where the Christian father and the Christian mother respect and read the Bible, and where children are reared by the teachings of Christ" (The Ideal Home, p. 17, by I. A. Douthitt).

This experience of Mr. Grady serves to point out the blessings of an ideal home. It also helps us to realize that the United States government can never be any better than the homes which make that government. No nation can rise above the faith, the ideals and the standards of its homes. God ordained that the home should be the center, and the foundation unit of society. It has been so throughout the ages.

Our people who have been reared in ideal homes are blessed among the blessed. Their early life will always be the source of many pleasant memories, and their lives will constantly reflect their good training.

It would be one of the greatest pleasures of my life if I could say truthfully that all the homes of America are ideal, but this statement cannot be made. It is not true! Many American homes are far from ideal. In fact many cannot be called homes at all. They are nothing more than houses.

A few years ago a friend of mine asked some teen-age girls to define "home," and one said, "It is where we go between midnight and daylight when everything else is closed." Some men were asked to define "home" and one replied, "It is where we fight our private battles." A woman defined home as "The place where we slave the hardest and are appreciated the least." Someone else has defined "home" as "A place to stay while you get your car fixed."

A few years ago a friend of mine asked a class of small boys to define "home," and one little fellow said, "It is where we eat." In thousands of homes children are being reared as though they were boarders. Sleeping quarters and three meals a day are all that "home" represents to such children. Between meals and after school they are shuttled into the

streets, off to the movies, over to the neighbor's or down the alley—anywhere to get them out of the way. Parents in these homes are disinheriting their children—attempting to rear them by remote control. They never know when some stranger may sow the seeds of sin in the hearts of their children. Such parents would do well to ponder the "Questions for Parents" asked by Edger A. Guest.

To some stranger on the street
 Would you hand your purse and say:
 "Care for this till next we meet,
 It contains my weekly pay?"
 Would you let him have your car
 And his name not ask to learn?
 Would your folly run so far
 With a thing you've worked to earn?

Do you leave your watch and rings
 Loosely strewn upon the curb,
 Hoping all your cherished things
 Passing strangers won't disturb?
 Though we all have moments rash,
 And do much we never should,
 Would a stranger's check you cash
 And expect it to be good?

How about that girl or boy?
 Are they guarded with the care
 And the wisdom you employ
 With the jewelry you wear?
 Or, without the slightest thought
 Of the dangers they may meet,
 Do you trust them to be taught
 By some stranger they may meet?

Many American fathers are losing their children through their own negligence. They are like the father who took his little child into the field on Sunday. Since it was a hot day, he lay down under a beautiful shade tree. The little child ran about gathering wild flowers and bringing them to its father, and saying, "Pretty! Pretty!" At last the father fell asleep, and while he was sleeping, the little child wandered away. When he awoke his first thought was "Where is my child?" He shouted at the top of his voice, but all he heard was his echo. Running to a little hill, he looked around and shouted again. No response! Then going to a precipice some distance away he looked down, and there upon the rocks he saw the mangled form of his beloved child. He rushed to the spot, took up the lifeless corpse and held it to his bosom: and accused himself of being the murderer of his child. While he was sleeping, his child had wandered over the precipice. How many of you fathers who are listening to me at this moment are asleep while your children are wandering over the cliff right into the bottomless pit?

Many mothers are just as negligent as the dads. Their negligence may be illustrated by the experience of one mother whose son was soon to be hanged. She came to pay the last

visit, and throwing her arms around his neck, she said, "My boy, little did I think I was raising you to go to the gallows. Oh, my son, if you had only died in infancy!" And she wept upon the shoulder of her boy, but he stood there as hard hearted as though he had no heart at all. At last he was tired of his mother's weeping, and he pushed her away, saying, "Go away from me! If it had not been for you, I would not be here!" Nearly fainting, the woman screamed, "My son, I never taught you to do wrong!" The man replied, "No, but you never taught me to do right."

Many American homes are far from ideal because the parents have neglected to study the Bible. Several years ago some people in the West heard of an old missionary who had returned to this country, and they employed him to make a survey of the West Coast, and to write a series of articles on the changes that had taken place during his thirty years absence from America. He made the survey, visited the homes, assembled his data, and wrote his articles on "What Impressed Me Most." He surprised the people who hired him for he did not write about the skyscrapers, good roads, and new automobiles, but he wrote: "The thing that impressed me most is that the American people have forgotten to read their Bible and to pray." (*The Ideal Home*, by I. A. Douthitt, p. 25).

Through our failure to study and obey the Bible, we have suffered, and our children are suffering. One marriage out of four is ending in divorce. It is predicted that by 1960, one third of the marriages will fail. This condition has led an eminent psychiatrist, Dr. Edward Strecker, to say that "America is on the brink of disintegration because we have lost our spiritual values. Through technological advance we have achieved a highly materialistic civilization, but underneath we are straw." Dr. Strecker held out a ray of hope. He said, "We're pretty far along the road to disintegration, but we can still turn back with a tremendous effort" (Associated Press, Feb. 11, 1948).

Before a Congressional Committee qualified witnesses testified that the blame for juvenile delinquency must be laid upon the parents. Two professors who testified had made a study of five hundred delinquents. "They found that sixty per cent of the parents had no love for each other; that 67% of the delinquents had no family group recreations; that 80% of the parents were not hospitable to their children's friends; that 50% of the mothers and 66% of the fathers had criminal records, and that 60% of the fathers drank to excess" (*Ft. Worth Star-Telegram*, Nov. 25, 1953). They also found "that 98% of the delinquents had associations with other delinquents frequenting the streets, pool halls, squalid movie houses, dance halls, and similar places" (*Ibid.*).

On June 5, 1953 a law went into effect in Texas which provides that district judges may hold the parent or guardian of a minor child responsible for the child's delinquency. Under that law Judge Roane of Richmond, Texas gave four fathers six months suspended sentences. He said to the dads, "If your boys commit any more thefts, you will serve the six-months in

jail" (AP, Abilene Reporter-News, Dec. 2, 1953).

The Bible teaches the truth that "as mother is, so is daughter; as father is, so is son." If you want your daughter to grow up to become a woman of modesty, let her see modesty instead of immodesty in mother. If you want your son to grow up practicing decency, be decent around your children at home.

Parents cannot indulge in harmful habits, and have an ideal home. The effects of alcoholism in the parents are nearly always to be found in their children.

To have an ideal home there are certain requisites. In the first place, the parents must love each other. Love is the mortar that holds them together as husband and wife. It is the bond that binds and ties them to each other. One of the most emphatic and suggestive statements in Holy Writ is that found in Col. 3:19, which reads, "Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them." God has placed upon parents the responsibility of being homemakers, and they cannot be successful in this great undertaking unless they love one another. No child can grow into normal adulthood who must live with embittered parents.

To have an ideal home the parents must be Christians, and they must live Christ before their children. They must also teach their children the way of righteousness, and this must be done from an early age. The early impressions you make upon your children are lasting ones. "Psychologists tell us that of all the myriad impressions of babyhood, not one is lost. They sink as it were beneath the surface of memory and become a part of the child's life" (The Home As God Would Have It, by Daisy M. Sewell, p. 87). Tennyson represents the wanderer Ulysses as saying, "I am a part of all that I have met." God says in His Word that there are two kinds of people in this world—namely, vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor. It is within your power to make of your child a vessel of honor or a vessel of dishonor. If you would make it into a vessel of honor you must begin early to teach it the word of God.

The ancient Hebrew was enjoined under the law of Moses to teach his children the law of the Lord diligently. Moses said, "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up" (Deut. 6:6, 7). If we treat the law of Christ in a similar way in our homes today, we can hardly fail in the accomplishment of good results in child training. But the word of God must be in our hearts. This is essential for Jesus said the mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart. The trouble with most child trainers is that they have in their hearts too many things other than the word of God, and they talk about these. If we would spend more time discussing the beauties of a genuine Christian life, we would not have so many wayward children, and broken homes.

To have an ideal home, the father and mother must work as a team in the teaching of their children. The Lord said to dads, "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them

up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). He said further, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). The Lord admonished young mothers to "love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home" (Tit. 2:4, 5). In describing a good mother the Lord said, "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her" (Prov. 31:27, 28).

In this age every craftsman, every salesman, every merchant, and every mechanic must have special training. The doctor, lawyer, and teacher must spend years preparing for the tasks of caring for the physical, mental, and governmental well-being of the human family. But how much more important is the training of our children for successful homemaking.

In an ideal home there is a peaceful atmosphere. The clashes and conflicts of the world are not allowed to enter. Business troubles are not brought home. Christ is the centerpiece, and his word is considered in every major decision.

In an ideal home the children are looked upon as a blessing. They are considered as "an heritage of the Lord" (Psa. 127:3). Solomon said, "Children's children are the crown of old men" (Prov. 17:6). Someone has said, "Children are the 'sweet' of 'Home Sweet Home.'" With this sentiment I am in perfect agreement.

In an ideal home the children love and honor their parents. Solomon said, "The glory of children are their fathers" (Prov. 17:6). The Lord said, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:1-3). Parents owe it to their children to give them a family name that is above reproach, and then children have the obligation of keeping that name an honorable one. But the greatest name you can leave in your child's memory is that of "Christian." It is in this name that we glorify God (1 Pet. 4:16). And it is through Christ's name that we obtain salvation (Acts 4:12). However, it takes more than mere sentiment and lip service to become a Christian. The Lord said, "Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph. 6:6). To become a Christian it is necessary that our faith lead us to repentance and baptism (Mark 16:16). The members of the church in Corinth were sanctified in Christ when they heard, believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8). Is your faith strong enough to lead you in obedience to Christ? If so, you too, may wear the name Christian, the most exalted name in earth and heaven.

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