

Walter D. Gray

W.D.G.: The Sweetest Home on Earth

W.D.G.: Matthew 7:24-29

The Bible tells us there are many homes. There was the home in the Garden of Eden, the first home the world has ever known. There was the home of Jacob, where there was a great love and yet many tragedies. There was the home in Bethany which Jesus loved to visit. There was the home of the Prodigal Son, a home which reached out to the far country and brought a wandering boy back to his father's arms. There was the home of Aquila and Priscilla where a New Testament church was organized. There was the home in Nazareth where Jesus grew to manhood. But the sweetest home on earth is the Christian home. It is a home where Christ is the head, a home where the father and the mother and the children love God and live for each other.

The text tells us of two houses. One was built upon the rocks and it stood, the other was built upon the sand and it fell. It challenges us today to build our homes on the Rock. Too many people are building their homes upon the sands; the sands of sin and ~~indecision~~ and indifference. These homes are going to fall. The only home that will stand is the one that is built upon the Rock and that Rock is Christ.

It is hard to get away from the influence of a Christian home. As a young man R.A. Torrey resented his mother's religion. She tried to tell him about Christ and what Christ could do for him. He became tired of this and decided to leave home. When his mother told him good-bye she said, "Son, if you ever get to the end of your road and you don't know what to do, just turn to Christ and he will help you." The boy left home, glad to get away from such pious talk. The months went by and he had gone deep down into sin.

Christ

He soon became tired of such a life. One day in a hotel room he did come to the end of his own resources and was ready to commit suicide. Then he seemed to hear his mother's voice telling him to turn to Christ. He went down upon his knees, poured out his heart to God and found peace and salvation. Immediately he went home. His mother saw him coming and ran to meet him. She threw her arms around him and said, "I know what you have come to tell me. You have come to the end of the road and you have called upon Christ and he has saved you." Later Dr. Torrey became one of America's greatest preachers, a mighty evangelist and Bible scholar. He could not get away from the influence of a Christian home.

Let us consider this morning the Christian home. And let us do so by asking the question: "What does it take to have a Christian home?" *To have a Christian home is to have the Rock.*

I. A CHRISTIAN HOME HAS CHRISTIAN PARENTS

Fortunate and blessed is a child born into a home where the mother and father are both consecrated Christians. There are many homes where the mother is a Christian and the father is not. She will have a hard time bringing up her children in the way of the Lord if she does not have her husband's help. In a real Christian home both the father and the mother have had an experience with Christ and they live for Him every day. It would be great to be the son of a president, it would be wonderful to be the child of wealthy parents, but it is finer still to be the child of a Christian man and a Christian woman.

There are two ways of saving those who are in danger of perishing in the sea. First, there is the lifeboat method. Someone is fighting to keep from drowning and brave men row out in a lifeboat to save them. Then there is the lighthouse method. Our government places a lighthouse at strategic places. These beacons furnish light to keep ships and people out of danger in the first place. The same two methods can be used in the home. We can let

our children drift out into danger and then try to rescue them, but the better way is to provide a light in the home so that they won't drift into the dangerous waters. That light must be Christ and ~~Christian~~ parents must provide the light by being Christians themselves.

X Dr. John G. Paton was the great missionary to the Hebrides. He said that as a boy his father had a small room in the house where he went to pray. Often as he tip-toed by that room the boy would hear his father in prayer. Dads, do your children ever hear you pray? Do they recognize you as a Christian? The greatest thing they can ever say about you when you are gone/ is, "My parents were real Christians. They loved Christ and lived for him."

I believe that most parents want to give their children the best things in life and this is commendable. But if you give them all that the world has to offer and withhold Christ from them, you will be making a terrible mistake. No child can have a finer gift than the gift of Christian parents.

II A CHRISTIAN HOME HAS A VITAL CONNECTION WITH THE CHURCH.

I have known people who claimed that they had been born again. They claimed that they lived separated lives, but they were not faithful to the church. Therefore, they had absolutely no Christian influence. Your children will have no confidence in the faith you claim to profess ~~unless~~ unless they see it in action, both at home and in church. They ought to know that you love the church, that you support the pastor, that you give your tithes and offerings. They ought to know that the church is important in your life.

I remember driving through a little town in Oregon. As I came down ~~the~~ a certain street and there at the head of the street was the First Baptist Church. That is the way it ought to be. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ ought to be at the head of our lives.

Dr. Bill Christie tells of receiving a letter from a woman in which she criticized him greatly, and not only him, but the pastor before him and the one before that. In the last paragraph she said, "I have five children and they all hate God and the church and religion." Of course, they do. She was reaping what she had sown. She criticized the preacher and the church and planted the seeds of doubt and sin in the hearts of her children. // A home where the parents have a loving and vital connection with the church will not be like that. The basis for a Christian home is that it must have a vital connection with ^{God's} the church. A baby will not survive if its umbilical cord is not connected to its mother. We must be connected to God's church if growth is to take place in ^{our} life.

III. A CHRISTIAN HOME HAS CERTAIN VITAL ELEMENTS

1. There must be unity. When a young couple marries they are just two people against all the world. They ought to be united in every ambition and purpose. Bobby Burns' beautiful poem, "John Anderson, my jo, John" has an elderly wife talking to her husband. She tells of the years that they have walked together, of the sorrows and the joys they have shared and she ends up by saying:

Now we maun totter down, John,
And hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep the gether at the foot,
John anderson my jo!

Yes, that is the way it should be, two people walking hand in hand and both of them holding the nail-pierced hand of Jesus.

2. THERE MUST BE LOVE. ~~FAITH~~ This love ought to be an expressed love. All the family ought to know that it exists. I know that my father loved his family because he expressed his love. Dr. Joe Burton tells of a funeral that he attended. A young mother died and left a sorrowing husband and two ~~of~~ children. The neighbors filled the house and the yard, waiting for the time of the service. Dr. Burton stood by the father in the kitchen, trying to comfort him. Then he said that the man's little girl,

about five years of age, slipped her hand into her Daddy's hand, pressed the rough fingers and said, "Daddy, I love you." Oh, that is what we need in our modern homes. We can weather all the storms of life if love is there.

3. THERE MUST BE CONVICTIONS IN THE HOME. We seem to have lost the ability to determine right from wrong. The popular feeling today is that there is a great gray area and it is not important whether things are right or wrong. But the Bible makes it very clear that on moral issues things are either right or wrong. There is no middle ground. If they are wrong the Christian home must stand out against them. Too many children today are growing up and saying, "There is no harm in that." We ought to teach them to say, "That is wrong and I am not going to do it." But in order for children to have strong convictions, parent must develop some strong convictions of their own. And maybe the first convictions we need to develop is to say with the Psalmist: "As for me, I will serve the Lord."

A CHRISTIAN HOME HAS A FAMILY ALTAR

Some people don't even ask the blessing at the table anymore. A little boy was invited to dinner in a Christian home. When the family sat down at the table everyone bowed their heads and the father offered a prayer. The boy asked, "Why did you do that?" They explained it to him. Then one of the boys in the home asked him, "What does your father say when he sits down at the dinner table in your home?" And the little boy answered, "He says, 'Go easy on the butter, boys, it costs seventy cents a pound.'" Another boy who was a Christian went to dinner in a certain home. He bowed his head and waited for someone to ask the blessing, but no one did. They just started eating. Then the little fellow asked, "Don't you thank God for your food?" When they told him that they did not do this he said, "Well, that's just like my old dog. When I feed him he just lights in. But I didn't know people did this."

Every home ought to have a time when God's Word is read and prayer is offered. The children ought to hear the voice of their parents in prayer and they ought to learn to pray also. And young people, let me challenge you with a way out idea. On your next date, why not conclude that date with prayer. Take God on your dates with you. Conclude you date with a time of prayer. Thanking God for a good time. And parents, if you haven't started a family time of prayer and devotions in your home, let me urge you to start one today. *(A* Christian home *is a* home of prayer.

Howard Walter wrote a very lovely song, e titled: "I Would Be True." He was in Japan on a walking tour. One night he stopped at a lovely Japanese inn. He was entertained by the geisha girls and then was tempted to spend the night with them. But then he thought about his family back home, he thought about his wife and how they were praying for him. It was not hard for him to turn down the temptation. He went to his room and wrote the song which we sang today:

I would be true, for there are those that trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

I would be prayerful through each busy moment;
I would be constantly in touch with God;
I would be tuned to hear the slightest whisper;
I would have faith to keep the path Christ trod.

Later Howard Walter returned to Japan as a missionary and there gave his life in the service of Christ. But he testified time and time again that he owed much to his family and their prayer times together. We need prayer in our families in order to face the battles of life. We need to be undergirded by prayer and strengthened by the memory of a family communicating with God.

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V. THE CHRISTIAN HOME - A FORETASTE OF THE HEAVENLY HOME

Now, I really believe that. The nearest thing on earth to heaven should be a happy Christian home. But there is a great difference between an earthly home and a heavenly home. In the earthly home tears may fall and sorrows may come, but none of these things can touch the heavenly home.

As parents we have a responsibility to help prepare our children for heaven. A dying girl said to her mother, "Don't weep, mother. I will tell Jesus that you brought me to him." Mother and Dad, this is an honor you must covet. Don't leave your children's salvation to others. Make your home a colony of heaven on earth. ~~//////~~

One Sunday afternoon a little boy was looking at a book of pictures while his father read the Sunday paper. Soon he came to Holman Hunt's picture, "The Light of the World." This picture shows Jesus with a lantern in His hand, standing outside a door and knocking. There is no latch on the outside and no one opens the door so that He can enter. "Daddy," said the little ~~//////~~ boy, "why won't those people let Jesus in when He knocks?" But his daddy was absorbed in his reading and did not reply. The little boy thought for a minute and then he said, "I know, Daddy, they won't let Jesus in because they are all down in the basement."

Oh, friends, let's get out of the basement of life and live on a higher plane. Let us take Jesus into our hearts and homes and give him full control of all that we are and ^{affair we} have. Then, our homes will be the ^{develop some Christian Home with} ~~the~~ sweetest homes on earth.

F. B. C. Portwell 9 April 72