

Bible quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

First printing, November, 1982. Second printing, February, 1987.

Published by Strang Communications Company 190 N. Westmonte Drive

Altamonte Springs, Florida 32714 (305) 869‑5005

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**YOU CAN HAVE A CHRISTIAN HOME!**

Even homes that have Christians living in them are not necessarily "Christian." Edgar Guest said, "It takes a heap o' livin' in a house t' make it home." Well, it takes a lot of effort in a home to make it "Christian. "

You'll find in each chapter of this book a necessary ingredient that will make for a wholesome, well‑rounded, Christian home.

**1. Try a Little Tenderness**

A number of years ago, I was pastoring in Gary, Indiana. My wife, Joyce, and I were happily married. However, one day we had a traumatic experience that was almost devastating.

I was trying to get Joyce to do something she wouldn't do. I can't even remember what I wanted her to do now ‑ probably run an errand for me or some such thing. It really wasn't all that important but I, believing that I was "the head of the house," decided to make a "federal case" out of it.

"Joyce, you've got to do it!"

"Well, I won't, and that's that," she said.

"But you've got to. I'm the head of this house!"

"I don't care. You're not getting me to do any such thing! "

Whirling around, thoroughly exasperated and defeated, (at least for that round), I flung the front door open, stomped through it, slammed it behind me (shaking the whole house), and strode down the walk towards my car.

Now I had just purchased a beautiful new Impala Chevrolet station wagon. It was the first year for seat belts. And it was the first automobile I had owned with a transistor radio that came on immediately when the motor of the car started. I buckled up, turned on the switch, and as the motor turned over with a roar, the radio came on strong, too. It was a "blues" singer.

I reached over to turn the dial. As a young minister I always turned secular music like that off. I loved jazz before I became a Christian but now wanted only to listen to the very "finest" of music.

I couldn't help but hear part of the lyrics before I could turn it off. Holding steady, I listened to that girl sing.

I can't remember all of the lyrics, but the part that stands out in my mind went something like this, "If you've tried this, and if you've tried that, and nothing works, then tryyyy a little tenderness!"

"Wow! " I thought to myself. "I'm not believing this is happening to me!"

Then I remembered that in the Old Testament God spoke to one of the prophets through a donkey. So why couldn't he speak to me through a "blues" singer?

The next verse said practically the same thing. "If you've tried this, and if you've tried that, and nothing works, then tryyyy a little tenderness!

I was shaken to the core!

Shutting off the motor, I unbuckled my seat belt, got out of the car, went back up to the house, flung open the door to the front room and found Joyce still standing there with her little heels dug stubbornly into the rug. I mean she still had that determined look that's a little like the Rock of Gibraltar.

Throwing precaution aside, knowing I had nothing to lose, I slipped across the room, folded her in my arms, and "tried a little tenderness!"

You can believe this or not, but she did what I had asked her to do which started the argument. I don't remember what it was now, it has been so long ago, but she did it!

We men need to realize that we can get our wives to do practically anything to cooperate with us, if we'll just “try a little tenderness!" Later, I recalled that I had told Joyce I was "head of this house."

A husband and father is not "the head of the house.”

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church . . . " (Eph. 5:23).

That means he is not a domineering dictator; he doesn't strut around the place like a generalissimo; he is not to be a " Lord over God's heritage." Jesus said, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. *But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister …”*

(Matt. 20:25‑28).

This same principle holds true for pastors and their congregations, bosses and employees, teachers and students, parents and children, as well as husbands and wives.

A husband treats his wife like a queen. A husband ought to be the best friend his wife ever had.

On the other hand, a Christian wife has her contribution to make. A wife is "the head of the house." You may say, "I've never heard of such a thing. " Have you never read the Scripture, "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully" (I Tim. 5:14)?

What a relief I experienced when I discovered that Scripture! Now if Joyce wants to move the divan from one side of the room to the other, or if she wants the garbage carried out, I just let her do it! Think of all the hassel a man avoids!

A wife and mother gives the home warmth and beauty. She is the one that works out the schedules. And she is submitted to her husband, though he delegates the running of the home to her.

In being created from man, or out of man, she was not: out of his head to dominate, or to be over him, nor out of his feet to be under him, or trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, from under his arm to be protected by him, and near to his heart to be loved.

If the man is the head, she is the crown ‑ a crown to her husband. The man was dust refined, but the woman was doubly refined ‑ one step further from the earth.

In creation, says Scripture, Adam was the first man formed. Then Eve was created so that woman might be for the man, setting forth the humility, modesty, and gentleness that should characterize her kind.

Yet man, in being made the last of all God's creatures, was set forth as the best and most excellent of all of God's creative works.

So Eve being made after Adam and out of him ‑ sets an honor upon the woman as being the glory of man.

"God, when he made the first woman ... made her not of the heart of Adam, for she should not climb to great lordship; . . . also, certes, God made not woman of the foot of Adam, for she should not beholden too low; for she cannot patiently suffer; but God made woman of the rib of Adam, for woman should be fellow unto man." ‑ Chaucer, "The Persones Tale," 1370.

**2. Battling the Budget!**

The number one problem in any home today is money. Christian homes are no exception if the people involved do not follow the principles of God's Word.

Our homes can be "heaven on earth" if we'll follow the directions (Deut. 11: 2 1 ). One of the first principles of God's Word, since "the love of money is the root of all evil" (I Tim. 6:10), is that we learn how to give. And when we do learn to be generous, heaven comes down. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the *windows of heaven*, and pour you out a blessing, *that there shall not be room enough to receive it* (Mal. 3: 10).

Tithes are for the ministry of the Word (Num. 18:26).

Offerings are for tools for the ministry (I Chron. 29: 1‑9).

Alms are for people that are poor (Matt. 6:1‑4).

If we wish our homes to be blessed, we must, before paying any other bill, pay our tithes into the fellowship where we get our spiritual food. Pastors have put alot of pressure on their people not to give tithes to evangelists or projects that are supplementary to the church. "Tithes belong In your church," the pastor will say. Evangelists who want to please the pastors parrot the same thing.

Generally that premise is true. However, let's be for real. If you're going to a church where you're not being fed and another ministry is feeding you, well, just put two and two together. That would be like living in a home where you seldom get fed although you're helping with the grocery bill. In order to get something to eat you must go to the neighbors for a handout, yet you've given all your grocery money to someone who doesn't feed you!

You notice I stated, "before paying any other bill."

The Scripture declares, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the *firstfruits* of all thine increase: *so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine"* (Prov. 3:9‑10).

Offerings for church buildings (where the Gospel is preached), for Christian radio and TV ministry, for Christian literature, and other related tools for the spread of the Gospel have great reward. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom" (Lk. 6:38).

"He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6). That verse has to do with giving alms or giving to missions, especially foreign missions where people cannot help themselves. What great blessing is in store for churches or homes or individuals who learn to give to missions.

In other words, if we learn how to be generous in tithes, offerings, and alms as a family, God promises our "barns to be filled with plenty," our homes bountifully blessed, and an abundance of everything overtakes us.

But hear this! Our motives must be pure. We don't give to get! We give because we love God and His work. But we do expect to receive back when we give because God fulfills every promise, confirming His Word.

Another principle we must listen to from the Word is "Owe no man any thing!" (Rom. 13:8). When a bill is due, we either need to pay it or make arrangements for it. If we don't, our home cannot be blessed of God.

We must not let "easy credit" take advantage of us.

To borrow money to make money, if done wisely, is smart . . . like borrowing for a house or a car if the house will appreciate and we use our car to get to work.

But it is not smart to borrow money for a color TV or a boat ‑ some luxury item we can do without.

Whatever we do, we must live within our means. "Let your moderation be known unto all men…” (Phil. 4:5).

Savings is a must. "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer" (Prov. 30:25). When you reach your fifties or sixties and you've set aside nothing for retirement, you're going to be terribly sorry. We are not to "heap up treasures," but we are to prepare for winter so we can carry our own load. Galatians 6:5 says, "Bear your own burden."

Many families think they're tithing when they're not really. If you purchased your home for $25,000 twenty-five years ago, and now it's worth $100,000, you owe tithe on $75,000 which is $7,500! One of the ways to handle that is to have a will so that the church has a copy showing that at your death that money will go to the work of the Lord.

But a will is also important for your family's sake. Much money is lost because people have neglected this area of stewardship. Remember, "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children. " (Prov. 13:22).

If you really want God to prosper your family and help you to be a financial blessing to the work of the Lord, then follow this simple formula:

• Seek the Lord! ". . . And as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper" (2 Chron. 26:5).

• Work Hard! ". . . If any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. 3: 10).

• Be Moderate! "Let your moderation be known unto all men . . . " (Phil. 4:5).

• Use Wisdom! "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

Be Generous. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst with new wine" (Prov. 3:9,10).

**3. Pray Together/Stay Together**

Each family member needs time alone with God. Our children need to be taught to pray. When we pray, we should pattern our prayers after the Lord's Prayer.

First, and most important, we magnify His name. Then we line up with His perfect will by petitioning Him. Next, we ask God for our daily sustenance. We also ask God to forgive. We ask Him to help us have power over Satan and then, again, we magnify and glorify His name.

It is important to pray for saints and sinners and especially the leaders of the church and of the nation. "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (I Tim. 2:1,2).

It is easier to pray more often and not necessarily so long at a time.

The psalmist says, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice" (Ps. 55:17).

Reading three chapters a day with six on Sunday takes us through the Bible in one year. Even teenagers could be challenged to do that.

Someone has said, "Read God's Word 15 minutes a day; pray to God 15 minutes a day; and talk to someone else about the Lord 15 minutes a day and you'll never deviate from God." That statement has a lot of merit.

Having a family altar is also very important. This will be discussed in a later chapter.

One of the things I have done with our four children is help them memorize Scripture. With the Navigators system as a background, I put together key verses that have to do with the pentecostal testimony. By the time they left home they had *memorized almost 150 verses. All four of them love the Lord today, and I'm believing that love will continue until Jesus comes.*

*Our family always attended church together, not just because I was a minister but because each of us loved to go to church. None of the children ever showed any signs of not wanting to attend.*

*As the pastor, I had to be on the platform rather than sit with my family, so they had to shift for themselves. But what a joy it was to see each child come to find Christ, to be baptized in water, and to be filled with God's Spirit. Both of our sons feel the call of God on their lives, one daughter married a preacher and I'll be surprised if our other daughter doesn't marry a preacher, too.*

*Even if I were not a pastor, I am certain our family would attend church together at least three times a week. I believe we all need* to be more than "Sunday-morning" Christians.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10.‑25).

**4. The Church You Attend**

The kind of church we attend is of vital importance. I'm pentecostal by choice. I was reared in the Methodist Church and schooled in a nondenominational seminary where most of my teachers were Presbyterian, and most of my fellow students were Baptists. This gave me a diversified background, to say the least, in the Body of Christ.

Then I received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Rather than create waves, and stay in my denomination, I Joined with the pentecostals in 1954. I have flowed easily since the mid‑sixties with the charismatics of all denominational backgrounds.

But I've learned some things from this diverse background. It's a struggle with your family if you don't attend a church that's really "New Testament" in flavor.

However, you can't always tell what's on the inside by the name on the outside. There are some Methodists, or Baptists, or other denominational churches that are more "pentecostal" than the pentecostals.

The Scripture gives us a beautiful formula for choosing the church for our family to attend.

The church we attend, for example, should be a church with:

*Great Power* (Acts 4:33). The preacher should have anointed messages speaking out boldly to proclaim the message of Christ. The members of the congregation should have boldness to witness for Jesus, to pray for the sick, and to cast out devils.

*Great Grace* (Acts 4:33). Grace is one facet of the personality of the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of grace. The congregation, as well as the premises, should be dripping with "oil" . . . the oil of the Holy Ghost. Courtesy, refinement, and love should flow.

*Great Fear* (Acts 5:5,11). Apostolic authority should command respect. The elders should be full of wisdom and boldness to make decisions and discipline when necessary.

*Great Company* (Acts 6:2). I would hate to take my family to a church that is not growing. Whether large or small, a church needs to be adding daily to its membership. In fact, as it increases in size, it should begin to multiply.

*Great Wonders* (Acts 6:8). Signs and wonders should confirm the Word. If the Word ever needed to be confirmed, it's today. What good are the promises, if they aren't fulfilled? God promises us forgiveness of sins, healing from all diseases, protection from calamities, comforts of life, and a renewal of our youth. These promises need to come true before the eyes of the people.

*Great Miracles* (Acts 6:8). From the word "Go" in the early church, there has been one miracle after another. The greatest miracle of all is the salvation of a soul. We need to attend a church where altar calls are given for salvation.

*Great Persecutions* (Acts 8:1). A church should always command respect in a community; but its presence should make the unsaved terribly uncomfortable. If unregenerate men don't feel the church we attend is fanatical, too far out, or "Holy Roller," we probably should change churches.

*Great Joy* (Acts 8:8; 15:3). The services should be victorious. People should be smiling and exuberant. Funeral dirges have no place in a New Testament church. Even a funeral service for a saint should be more of a coronation service ‑ a real time of victory.

Yes, the church we attend is vital to our family's spiritual welfare. It needs to be a place that helps to mold the lives of our children, a place we can conscientiously support financially, and a place where we can feel free to invite our friends.

**5. Griping is Not Tolerated**

Murmuring and complaining in a home are absolutely out! "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer" (I Cor. 10:10).

"Shut up!"

"I don't care!"

"I don't have to!" Such outbursts were outlawed in the home in which I was reared.

"You can't make me! " "I don't like this! " and other such statements can make a home miserable. The evil spirits of hell are drawn like flies to such ugly talk. But the Holy Spirit is drawn to talk that is edifying. Instead of "I can't," why don't we say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

Instead of " I'm getting worse, " why don't we say, " I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Ps. 34: 1).

Instead of saying "I want it, but I can't afford it," why don't we say, "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing" (Ps. 34: 10).

Instead of "I need it, but it costs too much," why don't we say, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus " (Phil. 4:19).

Instead of, "I'm so afraid," why don't we say, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears" (Ps. 34:4).

Instead of saying, "I just don't have what it takes," why don't we say, "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8).

Instead of "Why does everything have to happen to me?" why don't we say, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Instead of "Everybody is against me, why don't we say, "If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us" (Rom. 8:31).

The things that make our home a "heaven on earth" are to praise God and compliment people. If our mouths are filled with praise, there's no room for complaints. We ought never to be in the presence of any family member, or anyone else for that matter, for more than 15 minutes without coming up with an honest compliment. If nothing else, we can always say, "Wow! You've really got a good appetite."

**6. Sex is Beautiful**

In a Christian marriage, sex is beautiful. But when wrongfully used, sex can be ugly. When sex is ugly, it always starts in our thoughts. All of us must program our brain instead of letting our brain program us. Satan injects vile thoughts. If we entertain those thoughts, there's no stopping that runaway desire until it turns from lust into sin.

Jesus said even an adulterous thought is sinful. (Matt. 5:28). "Everybody is guilty," someone might say. Everyone isn't "guilty." But even so, that wouldn't make it right.

Men are more tempted with erotic thoughts. Women are more tempted with romantic thoughts. If these thoughts are not directed toward one's own spouse, they are ugly and evil.

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). When we think evil thoughts, they are going to be expressed. Filthy talk, as a general rule, is evident in laughing about two things; the elimination of the body and sexual deviation.

God's Word says, "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth" (Col. 3:8).

It is so easy to be careless in our talk when we're with our own family. Whether we are children, young people, or adults, we need to keep our conversation out of the gutter. There are four areas of immorality that we must abstain from if we are to please God and keep His blessing on our homes. They are as follows:

 *Immodesty.*  Women are admonished to dress so that their attire is not provocative. (I Tim. 2:9). Although men's attire is not quite as critical in arousing carnal desire in others, it certainly follows that men should be careful, too.

*Touching*. It is stated in First Corinthians 7:1: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." That reference has nothing to do with helping someone up the stairs, shaking hands, or joining hands with brothers and sisters in the Lord in a circle of prayer. It does have to do with touching someone sexually who is not your spouse.

*Pre‑Marital Sex*. God's Word says, ''flee fornication'' (I Cor. 6:18). Although the word "fornication" is used in the Bible to describe any or all illicit sex acts, it specifically has to do with having sex with someone before marriage. Our children must be warned, both boys and girls, that their virginity is priceless. The emotional, psychological and physical scars of such actions are indelibly stamped on their personalities.

*Extra‑Marital Sex*. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will Judge" (Heb. 13:4). There is no place in Christianity today for trading husbands and wives, having mistresses, secret lovers, turning aside to a prostitute, or having an affair with someone other than your spouse. Of course, the world has different standards than we do. But we must obey God rather than the humanistic philosophy of a world with Satan as its prince. Oh, the heartache that comes to the entire, family, and especially to the children, when these directions from the Word of God are ignored.

But sex can be beautiful and honorable.

There are two basic reasons for sex in marriage.

*For Procreation*. (I Tim. 5:14). It's not natural for parents not to want children. There are unusual circumstances that prohibit couples from bringing babies into the world. There are situations where couples are unable physically to produce children. However, there are so many little ones today who are unwanted; adoption is a very "Christian" thing to do. What greater Christian service is there than to bring children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

  *For* *Pleasure*. Sex is a basic need for people just like hunger. Sex is one of the most powerful of drives in a man or a woman. True, it usually isn't activated in a woman as quickly as a man. And true, it may not take as many times a week to satisfy a woman, but the drive is still there.

These sexual drives are not evil. They are good. Sex is pleasurable. Nothing releases the tensions of this life any more than a wholesome, properly motivated, and mutually enjoyed sexual experience of a Christian husband and wife.

However, masturbation or self‑sex is sinful when accompanied by evil imaginations. This causes a terrible guilt feeling after the experience. Even when there are no evil imaginations, there is an unfulfilled sensation similar to guilt but better described as emptiness. That's why God says, "The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife" (I Cor. 7:4).

Husbands and wives should be totally free with each other's bodies as long as there are no sadistic or perverted actions. (By that I mean those things that would be physically or emotionally hurtful or uncomfortable.) Forcing one another to do something that is repulsive should be avoided.

Communication ‑ talking things over freely ‑ is vital to a couple. When there is an impasse in the relationship, the counsel of a pastor or a professionally qualified Christian is essential.

Our children must have their questions about sex answered by us when asked. There are good Christian books about sexual development written for different age levels. These can be left around in obvious places so our children can satisfy their curiosity without parents having to give a "formal" training in sex education.

**7. In‑Laws and Out‑Laws**

When we take our marriage vows before a Christian minister, God expects us to fulfill those vows. In fact, God takes our vows *very seriously*.

"When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee" (Deut. 23:21).

In marriage, we don't vow to marry the relatives, but no matter what we vow, you can be sure the relatives are going to be a part of our marriage.

What must we do? We must work out the proper influence the relatives are going to have on our lives and especially our decisions. In other words, we must set up priorities in our homes if our lives are to be blessed. Seven biblical priorities are given here to aid you.

God has to come first. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:3 3). There's no way for us to have a happy home unless each of us has Christ as Lord. And we must daily seek God's face in every decision that is to be made individually and collectively.

 *Self*  "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

When I stand before Christ at the judgment, my wife will not be by my side. Each of us must answer for himself. So, our personal relationship with Christ is terribly important. No wife must let her husband, or anyone else for that matter, dominate her. She should be submissive to her husband in everything except her conscience. That belongs to God. The same principle holds true in the relationship of children and their parents.

 *Spouse.* "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two‑shall be one flesh" (Eph. 5:31). Blessed is the man who, when he marries, leaves his parents' home as he gets on his own. What devastation occurs when a man is still tied to his mother's apron strings! What an untenable position it places a man in when his wife runs home to "Mommy" every time something doesn't go her way. After God, and after yourself, your spouse is the most important person to you in all the world.

*Children*. "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Your children are your ministry. Every dad should be a high priest of his home, a pastor to his little flock. Every mother ought to be an associate pastor, a help‑meet to her husband. The children are the beloved members of that little congregation and are to be brought up in a Christian, God‑honoring atmosphere.

 *Relatives.* "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8).

We cannot neglect our own people. We cannot pretend that our own flesh and blood do not exist. This concept cannot be carried beyond our immediate loved ones, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters. Jesus taught that there is that responsibility to our immediate relatives above our service to others in the Body of Christ (Mk. 7:10‑13).

*Other Christians*. "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (I John 3:11). In my ministry I have always set as a goal that my family be put ahead of the congregation. If I don't know how to rule my own house how can I take care of the church of God? (1 Tim. 3:5).

If a man is in business or works on a job for someone else and gives priority to that job over his family, he's missed God. The family must have preference. Look at what happened to Lot's family when he chose a more lucrative place to raise them. Their environment was absolutely an abomination. When settling our family, we need a homesite that's close to a good church and a good school, and in a community where the children will not be placed under heavy influence from other children with lower standards.

*Other people*. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). Our job is not to convert the world. Our job is not to feed the world. We are, however, to see that the message of Christ goes into all the world to every creature as a witness, and we are to do our best to see that every *Christian* is fed. Jesus had a special place in His heart for every child.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

We need to keep all of these things in the proper perspective. We need to budget our time so that we can help every good work without neglecting the most important things God has assigned us to do.

**8. Divorce and Remarriage**

There are many unscriptural reasons for getting a divorce. Divorce is out of the question scripturally just because our spouse is mean or because he or she drinks. God does not approve of divorce just because there is no love, or because a married partner is incompatible. Certainly a Christian would not get a divorce because he or she would rather be single. just because we like someone else better, or we don't like the relatives, or we don't like our spouse's friends is not a bona fide reason for a divorce.

Even when a spouse is not a Christian, there is no godly reason for divorce. However, one who is a Christian should weigh the consequences very carefully before marrying a non‑Christian. The warning is clearly stated in Second Corinthians 6:14: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness and unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness?"

Further pursuing the subject, there is no reason for

divorce when a spouse doesn't do his part to provide.

However, the Bible does have something to say on the subject. First Timothy 5:8 warns: "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. "

In view of this verse, a nonprovider can be in serious trouble with the Lord.

When there is physical cruelty or abuse, a person certainly has a right to self‑defense and to separate for a while from the offending partner. However, even then, God does not approve of divorce unless the continued cruelty or abuse prevents a coming together of a husband and wife.

There is one scriptural reason for divorce which God approves and only one ‑ fornication.

Fornication is a word that describes all uncleanness or sexual deviation. It can be committed through (1) deception, (2) adultery, or (3) desertion.

When a man marries a girl thinking she is a virgin and discovers she is not a virgin, he has a right to a divorce (Deut. 22:20‑21).

When a woman marries a man thinking his sexual preference is normal or "straight" as it is sometimes termed, and she discovers he is a homosexual, she has a right to divorce him.

"But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matt: 5:32).

After a person is married and the spouse has an affair with someone else, or has sexual relations with anyone else, that person has a scriptural right for divorce.

"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).

In First Corinthians 7:15 the Bible makes it clear that when a husband or wife deserts the spouse, that spouse is no longer obligated to fulfill the marriage contract. Defrauding in the Scriptures has to do with a marriage partner withholding himself or herself sexually from the other partner. It is cause for divorce.

"Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency" (I Cor. 7:5).

Divorce is not always approved by God, in fact, most of the time it is not, but it is recognized by God as final. Therefore, if a person is divorced, for whatever reason, he is not married in the eyes of God.

The idea that a Christian who is married after divorce has more than one spouse is erroneous. When the Bible refers to bishops or deacons having more than one wife, it is referring to bigamy or polygamy, not divorce and remarriage.

Paul states in First Corinthians 7:32‑34 that it is, as a general rule, better to stay single; however, he also makes it plain that it is better to marry than to burn with passion. (I Cor. 7:9).

Our Lord, when asked by His disciples whether or not a person who has been married, but for some reason finds himself single, should remarry, stated that everyone could not remain single . . . only those who are able to do it without sinning (Matt. 19:12).

God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). Anyone who contributes towards unscriptural divorce by actions or by counsel is in trouble with God. There is divorce that is scriptural. But divorce is still horrible whether scriptural or not.

Many times divorce is more difficult to live through than the death of the spouse. It would be less traumatic in many cases if the departing spouse were taken by death rather than by divorce. And, worst of all, the children stand to suffer as much or more in a divorce than the parents.

For a Christian husband and wife to get a divorce is unnecessary. Even if one of the partners falls, if the other partner is a Christian, he or she can forgive the transgression.

Men generally find it more difficult than women to see a pastor or other professional Christian counselor for help. Couples, however, need help when thoughts of divorce begin to enter their minds. They need counseling immediately. "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Prov 11: 14).

In the Kingdom today are many who have had problems in their marriages. But there always have been and are yet today many, many more who have been guilty of all kinds of sexual sins in their past. The church finds it much harder to forgive marriage problems involving immorality than it does sexual sins by singles. This ought not to be.

When God forgives, He forgives and forgets, no matter what the sin may be. We ought not to make persons pay for their marital mistakes the rest of their lives. We should keep reminding ourselves that those marriage problems are not always sin.

In the early part of my ministry I was closely associated with two families in a church where I was an assistant pastor. Something happened that left a lifelong imprint on my mind. One of the sons of one of the families had a wife who left him for a number of lovers. He remarried. His new wife was a lovely Christian girl. Because he had remarried neither he nor his new wife were allowed to take any leadership in the church, not even teach a Sunday School class.

The other family also had a son. He didn't marry until he was somewhat older. But during those single years, he was extremely promiscuous with several young girls. Finally, one night he came to the Lord and God wonderfully saved him. He stopped smoking, drinking and carousing. A little later, after feeling a call of God on his life, he entered the ministry. He met a Christian girl and married her.

The first young man, although he never to our knowledge deviated from Christ, was not allowed even to teach a Sunday School class. The second young man was openly sinful sexually but was forgiven and given credentials to preach the Gospel.

Now, where is justice?

Watching this happen motivated me to search the Bible to see if our traditional interpretation of the Scriptures was accurate. I found out that our interpretation was "weighed in the balance and found wanting. " (We must realize that the Scripture is inerrant but interpretations of the Scripture are not.)

Traditionally, in some churches, no divorce is permitted. In others, divorce is permitted, but remarriage is forbidden.

In our fellowship it is generally felt that divorce and remarriage are permissible under certain circumstances, except for ordained ministers.

My problem with the above illustration concerning the two young men, is that as long as the one didn't make his escapades legal by marriage we could forgive him and recognize him as a minister, but the other young man was banned from ministry because he had married the wrong girl the first time around. God help us to divide rightly the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15)!

**9. The Single‑Parent Family**

"For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called" (Isa. 54:5).

This was said to Israel, but it is applicable to every widow or widower, and to every divorced person who has to be both mother and father to the children. God will take care of you.

Fear God! (Ps. 34:9). As long as you fear God, everything that is good will come your way. It's a promise from God Himself.

"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Ps. 37:25).

Seek counsel! (Prov. 11: 14). When we don't know how to go about doing certain things, especially if we don't have a spouse to go to with our problems, then the smart thing to do is to seek counsel from some spiritual person who has expertise in the particular area of the problem.

God will help the single parent with the budget (Matt. 6:33).

God will help the single parent with the children (Isa. 54:13).

Every Christian parent, including single parents, have angelic hosts dispatched by the Lord Himself to watch over the youngsters (Matt. 18: 10).

Jesus was single. Paul was single. Daniel was single. Mary Magdalene was single. These were all people who were beautifully fulfilled. Although married people, as a general rule, have some advantages in personality development over single people, there are very wholesome exceptions.

If we have teen‑age children and are a single parent, as a general rule, it is more satisfactory to wait until those children are able to be on their own before thoughts of remarriage are taken seriously. However, according to First Corinthians 7:28, if you remarry, you have not sinned. But, it is sinful for a person to divorce a spouse in order to marry someone else. That is adultery (Mk. 10: 11‑ 12).

**10. Health in Your Home**

For sometime after the children began to come to our home, I prayed for them when they became ill with childhood diseases but not with a great deal of success. After studying the Scriptures more carefully, I began to do two things which gave tremendous success.

I searched my heart and I read in the Scriptures where many times children become ill because of their parents' wrongdoing (Ex. 20:4‑5). I discovered when I got my act together and lived by the Word, my children's lives were affected in a very positive way.

One other important matter! I stopped praying to God about some things and began to command the devil.

How vividly I recall that I would pray, pray, and pray some more about a fever, a cold or some other ailment and my prayers seemed to avail nothing. Then I learned if I followed Jesus' example of "rebuking" the fever (or whatever) I got results.

It is important for us when there is sickness in the home to search our hearts. There probably are three most prominent sins in families today which cause much illness.

 *Covetousness*. Covetousness is wanting what someone else has, or trying to keep up with everyone else materially. Covetousness is idolatry (Eph. 5:5). It is making an idol out of the almighty dollar.

Covetousness is also greed which is the root of all evil. "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith…” (I Tim. 6: 10).

It causes sickness to enter our home. When the Scripture says, "It pierces us through with many sorrows, " it is talking about sickness among other curses. And sickness is a curse (Deut. 28:16‑68).

When we fail to pay our tithes and give our offerings, we can expect sickness to come (Mal. 3:9). When we ignore the poor, we are inviting our prayers to go unheeded for healing (Prov. 21:13).

*Fornication*. Fornication is sex sin. All uncleanness sexually, including adultery and homosexual activity is fornication (Eph. 5:3‑4). Even to desire lustfully a person who is not our spouse is to sin the sin of fornication (Matt. 5:28).

We are asking for illness to come to our family when we do not keep sex confined to our marriage (Heb. 13:4).

Fornication is not something we just resist. We run from it as fast as we can (I Cor. 6:18). It's sinning against our own body. If any person defiles his body, God will destroy it. That destruction can come from sickness, and many times does.

 *Resentment.* Resentment is carrying a grudge. Resentment is failing to forgive (Matt. 6:15). Resentment eats like a cancer. Condemnation comes with permission from God when we carry resentment (James 5:9). Our Father actually turns us over to demons that cause sickness when we are unmerciful to others (Matt. 18:34‑35).

There are four steps in getting health flowing in our homes.

• Search our hearts (Ecc. 7:25).

• Cleanse ourselves (2 Cor. 7: 1).

• 'rake authority (Lk. 4:39).

• Believe (James 1:6), which also includes having faith.

You see, when we are careless in our Christian walk, we are sending to God a requisition for sickness to come into our homes. If we truly have been careless, God signs the requisition slip and sends it on to Satan. When Satan receives that signed "work order," he has permission to make his attack on us anytime he chooses. Sometimes it's sooner; sometimes it's later; but invariably it comes because God does allow Satan to come in and disrupt our lives.

**11. Obedience and Honor Pay Off**

In First Peter 3:1‑7 we read that happy homes are made up of obedient wives and husbands who are honorable. The apostle sets forth what may be termed guidelines for achieving happy homes. His first guideline was that a woman should be submissive. A wife should try to fit into her husband's schedule, should go out of her way to please him, and be obedient to his commands. This has to be qualified, however, to put God's laws first above her husband's.

The second guideline was that a woman should be exemplary. Even without their husbands going to church, wives can win their husbands for Christ at home if the wives are really Christian through and through.

Peter said that women should be pure. A woman is to be strictly a one‑man woman. Flirtations are not a part of a godly woman's character. Fantasy is dangerous and indiscretion is like a jewel of gold in a swine's snout (Prov. 11:22).

She needs to be meek. A meek woman is like a Raggedy Ann doll. You can toss Raggedy Ann across the room, you can drop her on her head, you can stand on top of her, but she still has a lovely little friendly grin on her face. That doesn't mean she's weak. It just means she's not a china doll that's easily broken or hurt.

Another attribute listed by Peter was that a woman should be quiet. There's not a normal man anywhere on earth who appreciates a loud‑mouthed woman. A woman with a quiet, nonassertive spirit is precious.

Finally, the Apostle Peter said a Christian wife should be respectful of her husband. Although she knows he's no big deal in himself, she recognizes the authority of God upon his life as her husband, and remembers that God Almighty has ordained that he rule over her (Gen. 3:16).

On the other hand, two major things are required of all Christian husbands. The first is to recognize her refinement. She's one step further from the earth and, as a general rule, she has about 60 percent of the strength of her husband.

There are two things that Solomon said a man could do to honor his wife that was a really good wife, praise her and give her the checkbook (Prov. 31:28‑30). What else could a woman possibly want from a man?

The second thing Peter required of all Christian husbands was to recognize their wives' consciences. No man has the right to dominate his wife, or to be a lord over God's heritage. She has a conscience that belongs solely to God;

A husband must always allow a wife to keep her conscience clear before God and refuse to do anything she feels in her spirit would damage her relationship with God. She should get up in the morning and fix biscuits, or whatever he prefers, before he goes to work. She should press his pants, go with him wherever he wants to live and work, and stand on her head if the need arises. But she does not have to go to the tavern or swap partners on the dance floor. She always is true to God regardless of the circumstances.

It is not necessary to follow God's instructions, but chaos results if we don't. It's our choice.

**12. Claim Your Children? No!**

We are to train our children. We are to love our children. We are to nurture our children. But we are not to "claim our children, " even though this is a well‑worn cliché among Christians.

Proverbs 22:6 advises us to "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. " The emphasis is on train. We don't just teach our children, if we want them to be effective. We train them, or show them how it's done. Then when they are old they won't depart from it.

It just won't work for us to take our children to church but not go with them, or for us to tell our children to be teetotalers and yet we drink. Nor will it work for us to tell our youngsters to work hard, give generously and show mercy, and yet we are lazy, stingy, and critical of other people. We must take the lead.

Pastors have the same principles to be applied in the ministry. Employers must apply the same principles in business. Civic leaders are held accountable in the same manner. We are hypocrites if we say to others, "Don't do as I do. Do as I say."

We are to love our children (Titus 2:4). When we give our children the feeling that they were an accident, or that they are not wanted, or that we don't think they will ever amount to anything, or that they are a real burden to us, we, of course, are asking for some real problems that affect our whole lifestyle. Love is patient and kind, along with a lot of other things that are essential in our relationship with our children.

To over discipline is just as bad as to under discipline. When we provoke our children to wrath or put pressure on them to the point of rebellion, we've gone too far.

We are to nurture, our children (Eph. 6:4). By all means, our little ones (and even our big ones) need us to encourage, not to discourage them.

They need us to feed them with the Word every day and to water them with prayer several times a day. We are to weed the sins out of their lives and to protect them from the plagues of the enemy by pleading daily a fresh bloodline.

Do we claim our children for the Lord? No! The reason for this is simple: God has no grandchildren.

Moreover, it's a copout. We are shoving our responsibility towards God. How do we think we are going to be our children's conscience forever? They must begin early in life to make decisions on their own. First, they will make unimportant decisions, more important, and finally the most important decisions. Of course these must be handled by our children with guidance from us along the way.

We believe that our children will be saved but the decision to accept Christ must be made by them, not us. We must do our part to train them, to love them, and to nurture them. Surely if we are successful in those three areas, our prayers will be answered for our children's salvation.

Parents, when their children go astray, need to be encouraged to "bind the devil" and to ask the Holy Spirit to deal with the children.

When we "bind" satanic forces which are influencing wayward youngsters, we ‑ through the power of prayer ‑ are paralyzing Satan long enough for the Holy Spirit to move in, tug on their heartstrings by conviction, and draw them to Jesus.

While their hearts are not blinded and dulled by satanic influences, they can feel the keen, sharp pricking of their consciences to move towards God. This "binding " has to be done by us every day until they, on their own, come to Christ. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34).

**13. Family Worship**

I can remember well when my dad walked out of the Methodist Church after teaching the Sunday School lesson and attending worship that very morning. He reached for his ever‑ready pack of cigarettes but instead of lighting up one, he crumpled the whole pack in his fist and threw it into a ditch full of weeds never to smoke another day of his life.

He was a hard man to live with for three months while the poison that had been accumulating in his system for 50 years (ever since he chewed green tobacco leaves as a little boy in West Virginia) was leaving his body. He chewed match sticks and chewing gum profusely for those three months.

Not only did his addiction to nicotine go but at the same time he started tithing. And our family started having a family altar.

I remember how he would get the family Bible after the 10 o'clock news and say, "Well, it's time to read." Mother and I would sit down with him for our family altar.

That was when I was a sophomore in high school. My brothers and sisters were grown and away from home. There are no words to describe the tremendous influence those last two years at home had on my life. The three of us had made total all‑out commitments to Christ by that time. That's probably why I'm in the ministry full time today.

We would spend maybe 20 minutes or so reading a chapter from God's Word and having prayer together. We'd take turns reading each night and every night each of us would lead in prayer. That time together was priceless to me as a teenager.

After my wife, Joyce, and I were married we would pray and read the Bible together, even before we had our first child. As Stephen came along, then Daniel, then Karla and finally Dawn, it was a regular habit every day. We took time right after supper for Bible reading and prayer. We took only about 10 minutes when the children were quite small and seldom more than 15 minutes even when they were older. But every day we had our Bible reading.

I believe this practice had a direct bearing on their lives. Our children are born‑again, Spirit‑filled young people. What more could a daddy ask than for his children to love Jesus?

It may not be necessary for you to do all these things which have worked for us. But because they have been helpful to us, I am sharing them in the hope some of them will work for you, too.

Family worship makes our homes a "heaven on earth. "

“And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

"And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates:

"That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth" (Deut. 11:19‑21.)

**14. Don't Get Old**

As I am writing this we have in our congregation a 97 year‑old "young" lady named Elva Stump. She is a blessing and a benediction to our people. Everyone loves her, especially our young people, because she has never grown old ‑just older. She went to Israel with us when she was 89. Until recently she drove her own car and taught a Sunday School class.

Always her sweet smile and her victorious voice lights up a conversation and calls attention to Jesus. Except for the excitement of being 97, people really don't think of her as an old woman.

There's no reason for any Christian to get "old.”

"Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Ps. 103:5).

God doesn't want our homes to have old people in them: that is, people bent over with heavy burdens, faces furrowed with worry, hands cold and drawn, and knees too weak to kneel on. That Just isn't necessary. Even grandparents can be tender, warm, and loving. Let's not get old. Here are a few helpful suggestions.

Keep learning. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God" (2 Tim 2:15). Your mind, if you keep it active, can be vigorous and sharp until Jesus comes for you. My mother‑in‑law is 93. She spends her summer in the Dakotas and her winter in Florida. Of course, she always takes a jet. I asked her one day, "Mother, how does it feel to be both beautiful and intelligent?"

"You ought to know," she quipped without batting an eyelash.

She finds it somewhat difficult to read now but she listens intently to the sermons in church, checks out the news on television, and is a ready writer to her children and grandchildren.

Keep growing. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour of Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). "The clouds return after the rain" when we stop growing.

Sometime ago, I was in prayer and the Lord showed me why so many old people get sick so often. It's not because they are getting older. It's because they have stopped growing.

"Just let the younger folks take over.”

"I've had my day."

"I've lost interest in those things.”

"I don't feel like it anymore."

"I guess my years are catching up with me."

Those expressions are devastating symptoms of growth that has stopped. And old age sets in quickly. With talk like that people will die before their time and they'll get ornery before they die.

Keep producing. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16).

It's not enough to grow. We must bear fruit. There's no reason why we can't continue to win souls as long as we live. "He that winneth souls is wise" (Prov. 11:30). John Wesley preached and won souls until he was past 80. It is a sure sign of old age when we can't clap our hands with glee when we see a poor, lost sinner make his way down an old‑fashioned aisle to an old‑fashioned mourner's bench to weep his way into the arms of a merciful Lord Jesus.

Keep rejoicing. "Rejoice in the Lord always…” (Phil. 4:4). Watch people who are getting old. Their faces look like they're set in concrete. They have an expressionless, sleepy appearance, or a scowl. That's sinful. Let's keep a sparkle in our eyes, a gentle smile on our lips, and it hurts nothing to have at least a bit of spring in our step. Don't plod. We don't have to let our voices get as raspy as a witch. These aging signs won't happen if we'll keep the joy of the Lord radiating from our spirit.

Keep moving. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Heb. 12:14‑15).

Don't get all embittered about the communists, or the terrorists, or the humanists, or the satanists.

We are to love our enemies!

Those people have souls. When we get poisoned with our own hatred, what good are we? We become old and crotchety. We'll never do the Lord or anyone else any good by returning evil for evil. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:19‑21).

**Conclusion**

The home is the basic unit of government. When the home is strong, our churches are strong, our schools are strong, and our communities are strong,. Our homes need to be havens of rest, a shelter in time of storm, a bit of heaven on earth. And they can be if we will apply scriptural principles.

What about you? Are you contributing toward your home life? Or, are you a part of the problem?

If you are not where you would really like to be with your relationship with God, would you pray this prayer with me?

~ 'Lord, I am terribly sorry I have sinned against my home, my loved ones, and I have sinned against You. Will You help me? Will You forgive me? Wash me clean with the blood of Your Son, Jesus Christ, I pray.

"Send Your love back into my heart, Lord Jesus. I am asking You by Your Spirit to come into my heart and renew my spirit with Your love. I surrender my all. In Jesus Name, amen."

Write me and let me know you have received Christ as your personal Savior, your personal Lord. Address your letter to:

Karl D. Strader

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