



# **Making A Home**

**Dr. P.B. Hill**



**4th Edition**

**Complemented, Contextualized, and Edited by Rev. A. Mitchell Moore**



## **Why read this booklet?**

The prophet Jeremiah spoke to people longing for restoration saying, “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.” (**Jeremiah 6:16**) This resurrected piece by Rev. P.B. Hill is part of “the good way” for the contemporary Church and offers restored life to marriages and families looking to flourish through God’s design. Now is the time for families to respond to God’s grace by returning to God’s ancient paths and *Making a Home* will empower restoration through re-centering relationships on Jesus Christ and His design for family.

## **Who is Rev. P.B. Hill and why resurrect his writing?**

Dr. P.B. Hill became a quick guide for me though he died over sixty years ago (1877-1958). Hill, a native Virginian, followed God’s missionary call to South Korea before moving to San Antonio, TX, to pastor First Presbyterian Church and later facilitate planting other Presbyterian churches in the city. In 1922 Dr. Hill was the first preacher in Texas to air sermons on the radio. Hill’s effective and formative radio ministry to the city and region earned him the title “Shepherd of the Hills.”

While greatly influential, Dr. Hill’s ministry was not always conventional. Hill is said to have walked the streets of San Antonio with six-shooters on his hips and a tin cup of water in his hand. After evangelizing, Hill would use the water to practice a non-traditional baptism after which he is described saying, “Now, when you go to heaven, you can see your mama.” Through Hill’s frontier-style evangelism, the rolls of First Presbyterian Church swelled to over 4,200 members, the largest in the denomination. Often when Hill preached he would casually put his six-shooter (Bisbee .45) on the pulpit, an appropriate gesture for a man appointed as chaplain for the Texas Rangers in 1928. An eclectic leader, Dr. P.B. Hill would travel with the Rangers to capture bandits while writing poetry prolifically. P.B. Hill was the first minister named Poet Laureate of Texas.

Dr. Hill was a passionate communicator who preached countless sermons. Hill’s pamphlets were published to serve those he shepherded towards better understanding and applying the Word of God he faithfully preached. As a pastor, husband, and father, Dr. Hill’s teachings on marriage and family have moved me to resurrect this pamphlet for two primary reasons.

First, the prophetic insight woven throughout this historical piece has relevant application today. Hill calls Christians back to faithfulness in marriage and family through the unchanging Word of God, providing rich refreshment for all who read. P.B. Hill’s words in this pamphlet are more relevant today than when he first wrote them decades ago. Lord, give us ears to hear.

Secondly, Dr. Hill artfully applies God’s Word to the Church and through the Church to society, highlighted by Hill’s potent connection between flourishing families and a flourishing society. The breadth of Hill’s understanding adds authority to the specific application of God’s Word. You will enjoy Hill’s urgency to reclaim the authority of God’s Word for the flourishing of marriage, family, and society. Lord, give us hearts to receive.

## **Gospel transformation for marriage and family**

I was raised in a fractured family and, by God’s grace, have been able to find a more flourishing path than generations before me. Lisa and I share four children from over twenty years of fruitful marriage. Our marriage has the same struggles as yours, marked with temptation for good things to compete for the ultimate realities in our marriage and family. I have discovered how the shift away from God’s design leads to fracturing of hearts and relationships and how God’s grace alone provides restoration and renewal of marriage and family. My desire is for your marriage and family to enjoy the goodness of restoration, too.

Culturally, there is a tremendous longing for the restoration, redemption, and renewal of marriage and family. The COVID19 crisis has, in some cases, deepened a desire for flourishing families while also revealing the fragmentation of family in every sphere of our society, cascading casualties downstream and flooding churches and cities

throughout the country. In the midst of the tumultuous waters, we must reach for stability and a strong teaching such as Dr. P.B. Hill's *Making a Home*. We must respond to God's grace through claiming the restoration offered through walking in God's ways; and His design moving us from fragmentation to flourishing. The Church in our world must freshly "...ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it- that we may find rest for our souls." In this crisis moment for marriages and families we must return to the Lord and His path for restoration.

### **How can you get the most from reading this pamphlet?**

The core text of Dr. Hill's original booklet is unaltered and you will enjoy every word. There is humor in some of the Texas ranch analogies, such as relating our children to horses or cattle. When read objectively this adds to the power of the entire piece. Several footnotes throughout the piece help explain Hill's analogies and references.

To complement and contextualize the words of Dr. P.B. Hill there are annotated footnotes for insight and application as well as questions to consider after each of the four sections. For emphasis there are quotes and Bible verses set apart in bold. Please take time to read everything on every page.

You will be enriched if you read the booklet a section at a time, taking time to reflect and redirect the affections of your heart, finding hope in the goodness of God and His design for your marriage and family. Renewal is offered in re-centering on Christ, His word, and His work.

### **Many thanks to project participants- it takes a family!**

To help bring this piece to life I asked six friends to offer insight. I want to offer special thanks to: *Carl Caton*, the founder of the San Antonio Marriage Initiative (SAMI) for his mentorship and contribution. *Judy Kruger* is an exemplary leader, mother, and friend who faithfully models Biblical marriage and family. *Holly Youngquist* models authentic love for Christ, family, and the Church and contributed powerful insight and perspective. Both Judy and Holly have helped create a culture celebrating marriage and family in Dr. Hill's former congregation- Thanks be to God. *Antonius Alvarez* is a husband, father, and scholar whose insert helps fill out the piece. *Matt Terhune* is a friend who sticks closer than a brother and shares his profound giftedness throughout several footnotes and side quotes. Matt's wholehearted engagement helped bring gospel shape to the entire piece. Thank you, Matt. I also want to thank the *FPC family ministry team* and *Rev. Dr. Bob Fuller* who stands in the boots of P.B. Hill as the current senior pastor at First Presbyterian Church, San Antonio. Together, these contributors offer a chorus of faithful insight worthy of a loud Texas, "Thanks, Y'all!"

Special thanks are offered to the family of Dr. P.B. Hill for allowing me the opportunity to put this piece together, resurrecting Dr. P.B. Hill's writing to re-present to a new generation. May the Lord be pleased to use Dr. Hill for new life in marriages and families in the Church today! Finally, I am thankful to Lisa and my four children. I never dreamed redemption and restoration of family could taste this sweet- Thanks be to God! May He be pleased to allow all who engage this pamphlet to taste the goodness of His restoring grace.

***"The home that endures must be Christ-centered. There will be problems that only the wisdom of God can solve. There will be times when only the strength of God will enable you to stand. There will be days when only a living faith will sustain you." -Dr. P.B. Hill***

### **Perspective by Carl Caton: The Importance of marriage and family for our society.**

The breakdown of family is a very old problem but with new realities. As you reflect on our history of the last few hundred years, it's interesting to note that even by the 1830s, 80% of families still lived very connected daily lives. It's surprising to consider that in the 1830s, 80% of dads were stay-at-home fathers because most of daily life happened around agriculture and the family farm. With the arrival of the industrial age, families began a migration to cities in pursuit of more prosperous lives, a situation that changed the landscape of the American family. The speed by which our families became more and more fragmented advanced through the tumultuous Progressive Era, two world wars, and the cultural shift of the 1960s. When no-fault divorce arrived in the 1970s the breakdown of the American family shifted into high gear. The personal pain and impact has been profound as outlined by author Ellen B. Sucov in her book *Fragmented Families: Patterns of Estrangement and Reconciliation*: "When the marital bond is severed, a seismic shift is set off in the family. Attachments that were taken for granted are now seen to be fragile and unreliable. New animosities erupt, exacerbating the instability in an already volatile emotional climate. If children are involved, the tensions will be heightened by custody battles and disputes over visiting rights. There may be lengthy separations from one parent, estrangement from grandparents on one or both sides of the family, and rifts between relatives in the extended family, who invariably take sides in the conflict."

There has been a staggering societal cost as well as the flood of downstream impacts addressed by futile government attempts to stem the tide. As Maggie Gallagher says, "When men and women fail to form stable marriages, the first result is a vast expansion of government attempts to cope with the terrible social needs that result. There is scarcely a dollar that the state and federal government spends on social programs that is not driven, in large part, by family fragmentation: crime, poverty, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, school failure, mental and physical health problems."

Strangely, it seems that our founding fathers could imagine such a scenario. When we think about the founding fathers and the creation of the constitution, we often think of Thomas Jefferson. He certainly was "the hand" of the constitution as he drafted our founding document. But we often forget the man who was thought of as "the mind" of the constitution, the fiery man of small stature who relentlessly created a stream of words that became the basis of what was written: John Adams. It's interesting to consider one of his deepest and most profound thoughts: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." Does that statement surprise you?

The genius of the founding fathers was this: they understood human nature and the hearts of men. They also knew this as an indispensable truth: in a democracy, you can only govern if the people are governable. And what makes men and women governable are their morals and values. So where do our morals, values, and virtues come from? Social scientists suggest that our values and virtues are transmitted in families, generationally. They posit that values and virtues are transmitted "along lines of affection." In layman's terms, that means that more than any other way, kids get their values and virtues from their parents.

In our culture we often view the marriage from the romantic perspective - that elusive "soul mate" idea. But just as important is the fact that every marriage is the "leadership team" of the family - your family. There is a reason why God creates the family in Chapter 2 of His book: because it's the design that helps the people flourish. And God uses families to propagate the Gospel. So as you think about your marriage, remember that God is using it to create society and to share the gospel and that your kids are a voice you send to a time you will never see.

John Stanley says it best: that the traditional family is the cradle of civilization, the first cell in the organism of human society. It is the most basic building block of communities, neighborhoods, and the myriad ways that people affiliate with each other. Families constitute the first school of character, teaching the meaning of love while developing a child's capacity for empathy, trust, and generosity. Children learn boundaries and discipline, as well as restraint, as they practice human interaction. It is often the first place where faith is lived and taught. Strong families create strong communities. There is no other institution that can replace the family.

**- Carl Caton, Founder & President of the San Antonio Marriage Initiative (SAMI)**

## Toward a Christ-centered home

The Christ-centered family keeps the person and work of Jesus Christ at the center of our hearts and home. We love because God has first loved us and only through God's grace can we truly walk in love. Revival and renewal begin and end with the work of Jesus Christ.

We find a picture of a gospel-shaped home in an unexpected place, the book of Job. The first introductory verses of Job, part of the Bible's wisdom literature, reveal a description of how Job led his household. Job "feared God and turned away from evil" (**Job 1:1**) as one of the "greatest people of the East." (**Job 1:3**) Job is described as "righteous," a status given by God and secured by sacrifice. How is Job's righteousness witnessed? "Continuously" (**Job 1:5**) Job offered sacrifices on behalf of his children and family. "It may be my children have sinned in their hearts!" Job proclaimed. (**Job 1:5**) The wisdom of Job compels us to center our home on sacrifice.

The sacrifice securing our righteousness is the death of Jesus Christ and the right response for a Christian home is to "continuously" re-center our lives and loves on the person and work of Jesus Christ. This looks like daily repentance and confession, claiming the cleansing of Christ for each member of our home. God is faithful and just and will purify us from all unrighteousness and His grace will empower us to walk in the light of His love. Revival and renewal come to a marriage and family centered on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Resist the temptation to find the Lord's ancient path of wisdom and restoration with your own eyes and in your own strength. We must (re)claim the power of the gospel for our daily lives, taking the work of God far more seriously than our own performance or contribution. Please join me in prayer for a more powerful engagement of this piece.

### ***Let us pray:***

*Lord, we thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that secures our righteousness before you. We pray for revival and renewal in our marriage and family through centering your sacrifice in our home. We thank you for showing Your love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Please forgive us for our sins, which are many. Please forgive us for allowing good things of this world to become ultimate things in our hearts and our homes. Please forgive us for centering our families on things other than Christ and building on foundations other than the Word of God. We praise You for forgiveness found in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Please purify us from all unrighteousness and empower us with your Holy Spirit to walk in the light, seeing Your good ways in the ancient paths that You have for your people. Please revive us and renew us by the power of your Holy Spirit that we might know You more fully and serve You more faithfully. Please use this booklet to re-center our hearts and homes on Jesus Christ.*

*In Jesus name we pray, Amen.*

MAKING A HOME

DR. P.B. HILL

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*For the glory of God through the flourishing of marriages and families*

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## THE DIVINE PURPOSE FOR THE HOME

The social structure of the world is shaken.<sup>1</sup> The way of life that we have known is imperiled. The storm center is the home. The seriousness of this lies in the fact that the home is the basic unit of society. In the beginning God instituted the family and made the home the primary institution. There a child receives the impressions that will largely determine his attitude to authority, both civil and religious. There his attitude to others and to society in general will be shaped. The seriousness of this is also seen in the fact that the character of the homes of a nation determines its destiny.

The present condition of the average home is due primarily to two things: The first is the failure on the part of so many to appreciate the sacredness and significance of marriage. The second is the failure to appreciate the divine purpose for the home and responsibility of parenthood.

If we would stem the tide that has set against us and save our nation from decay, we must study anew God's purpose for the home.<sup>2</sup> This we find to be fourfold: companionship, mutual helpfulness, perpetuation of a godly race and training children in the way of the Lord.

The first is companionship. We are told in Genesis, (2:18) that after God had created man he said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." Here we see two of the essentials of an enduring home: companionship and mutual helpfulness. The desire for companionship with the opposite sex manifests itself early and should be encouraged along proper lines. Children should be kept from forming associations that are injurious, but should not be kept from normal relationships. The companionship of husband and wife is very tender. Note the words of Adam. (Genesis 2:23) "and Adam said, 'This is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.'" Jesus said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife." (Mark 10:7) Through the Apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit said, "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. – So, men should love their wives as their own bodies."<sup>3</sup> (Ephesians 5:25, 28)

**Because of the sacred nature of marriage, it should never be entered into for material or social advantage nor for any ulterior end. The basis of marriage is love.<sup>4</sup>**

I do not mean that mushy sentimentality that is so common, so cheap, and so evanescent. I mean love that is deep and decent and abiding. The kind of love that Christ likens to his love for the church. This love is described by Paul in **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**, "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does

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1 Dr. Hill rightly draws a connection between the fragmenting of family and the unraveling of society. Genesis 1-2 clearly articulates how the flourishing of Adam, Eve, and their offspring would lead to the flourishing of God's world. Conversely, the fragmenting of the first family would lead to the tearing apart God's beautiful design. The rejection by Adam and Eve of God's authority in their lives (Genesis 3) led to a murderous division in their family (Genesis 4) and a massive disorder of God's good design.

2 The restoration of marriage and family is primary in God's mission to the world as displayed in the call of Abraham. (Genesis 12:1-3) God has commissioned His people to bless "all the families of the earth."

3 It is worthy of note to point out the authority of God's created design for marriage and family revealed in the creation account of Genesis is authenticated by Jesus's teaching on marriage and, later, the Apostles of the early church. God's standard for marriage revealed in creation is ancient in design but contemporary in application for the early Church and the Church today, never losing authority.

4 Tim and Kathy Keller offer powerful insight on Christian love in marriage writing, "*Within this Christian vision of marriage, here's what it means to fall in love. It is to look at another person and get a glimpse of what God is creating, and to say, 'I see who God is making you, and it excites me! I want to be part of that. I want to partner with you and God in the journey you are taking to his throne. And when we get there, I will look at your magnificence and say, 'I always knew you could be like this. I got glimpses of it on earth, but now look at you!'*" (*The Meaning of Marriage*)

God created marriage to be a covenant love—not love based on how you feel. You work to stay married because you made a promise to your spouse and to the Lord. Ask the Lord often to help you enjoy your spouse’s company. And at times “when the honeymoon has waned” (and it will wane sometimes) you must remember your covenant promises. Do not be surprised and do not give up.

—Judy Kruger

not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.” This love is patient and gentle. It is not petulant but understanding. It heals the hurt of the day at eventide. It binds hearts together as an indissoluble companionship.

Companionship thrives when there are common interests, books, music, flowers, outdoors, planning for the days ahead.<sup>5</sup> Companionship lives by loyalty. There was one man and one woman in the beginning, and God intends that it shall be that way until the end. Well does the prophet Malachi say, “...Let none of you be faithless to the wife of

your youth...” (Malachi 2:15) He knew that a divided loyalty would lead to the disintegration of the home. The love that begets this loyalty should fill one’s life. No home can endure very long if the husband or the wife have a confidante of the opposite sex, a “friend who understands,” with whom the faults and weaknesses of the life partner are discussed. Nothing but disaster can come from flirtations and “affairs.”<sup>6</sup>

**From the very beginning each must cultivate the fine art of living together happily. There is no reason why courtship (dating) should end after marriage. Marriage should mark the beginning of the highest joy and richest experiences in life.**

The primary task will be that adjustment. This must be mutual if it is to be accomplished. It is fruitless for a woman to try to make a man over after marriage, or for a man to undertake to change, to any marked degree, the ways of his wife. Sometimes, before marriage some changes can be wrought, but after marriage much of a couple’s happiness will depend upon their readiness to adjust themselves to each other and cultivate traits that will bring approbation and pleasure. This cannot be done in a day. It may take months or even years. It will take resolution, patience and prayer. Impatience and sharp words will retard it. Determination and love will speed its consummation.

I once read a story about a man who drove a shuttle bus for a rental car company at an airport. His job was to transport people who were waiting to pick up or drop off a rental car. He wished that his wife would be as excited to see him as his passengers were when he opened the shuttle doors to pick them up. It has since been my goal to welcome my husband with a smile and a kiss when he walks in the door... to stop whatever I am doing when he arrives and let him know that I am glad that he is home.

—Judy Kruger

The second purpose that we find in God’s plan is mutual Helpfulness. “I will make him an helpmate.”<sup>7</sup> The success or failure of nearly every man depends on the kind of woman he marries. The right kind of a wife inspires her husband to do his best and helps him to that end. She stands by him in time of trial; she is industrious, and she practices economy in the home.

She does not burden the home with debt but helps her husband to live within the family income. When the battle goes hard she fires her husband’s soul with courage and builds in him an indomitable will to win.

5 Every family, regardless of background or status, longs for *Connection, Commitment, and Companionship*. We are wise to approach companionship and common interests with humility, learning to enjoy what our spouse enjoys. The ultimate common interest for the Christian home is faith in Christ. When faith is cultivated, then joy, beauty, and fruitfulness will permeate all other common interests. True connection, commitment, and companionship are found in Christ alone.

6 Spouses must guard their hearts, as they are the wellsprings of life for the marriage! (Proverbs 4:23) There is no room for intimacy of any kind with a person of the opposite sex outside the home, whether at work, on the court, in the classroom, or at church. Your spouse is your primary relationship and the only place to find emotional, spiritual, or physical intimacy.

7 “Helper” is not a term of weakness, as many in our society understand it to be. The word “helper” is used of God throughout Scripture, notably in Psalm 121 and Psalm 54:4. The term is dignifying, imaging the Divine in a complementary role for marriage.

*Marriage is a matter of Commitment*

In marriage, husband and wife are called to a new way of life, created, ordered, and blessed by God. This way of life must not be entered into carelessly, or from selfish motives, but responsibly, and prayerfully.

**-Bob Fuller**

There is a like responsibility that rests upon the husband. He should never forget that while he has been at work, and perhaps has had to face some disagreeable situations, his wife has been for the most part within the four walls of the home busy with innumerable duties and beset with many cares.<sup>8</sup> He should come home with a cheery greeting and bring some sunshine with him. The husband, who returns in the evening as a grouch, is no comfort to himself and is a wet blanket to the rest of the family. He should avoid impatience and complaint, and he should deem it a pleasure to help with the little chores after the evening meal. Someone has said that a man will never be a success if he condescends to help with the dishes, cut the grass, or putter about the house. A man who will not do these things, when they are necessary, is already a failure.<sup>9</sup>

Husband and wife should never fail to express appreciation for the things the other does. The Bible says, "Praise benefits the upright" (**Psalm 33:1**) and it really does, when it comes from the heart. The little courtesies that mean so much out in the world should not be neglected in the home.

A husband should be fair with regard to the use of money. He should avoid debt and extravagance just as his wife should and furthermore, he should not spend their earnings without her knowledge.

**This spirit of mutual helpfulness not only fulfills God's purpose for the home, but it also prevents heartaches and promotes joy.**

A third purpose of the home is the perpetuation of the Godly seed. God commanded Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and replenish the earth." (**Genesis 1:28**) As the people of God marched up to the great feasts, they chanted the promise of God: "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine... Your children like olive plants round about thy table." (**Psalm 128:3**). Malachi, in speaking of the relationship of husband and wife, says "Did He not make them one, with a portion of their spirit in their union? And what was the One God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth." To deliberately seek to avoid bringing children into the world, except where physical, or other, conditions forbid it, is a violation of God's purpose for the home. To avoid parenthood for purely selfish ends is to invite loneliness and sorrow later.<sup>10</sup>

And though a man might prevail  
against one who is alone, two will  
withstand him— a threefold cord  
is not quickly broken.

**Ecclesiastes 4:12**

8 The Industrial revolution created a culture where women stayed at home while men went out to work, a more cultural than Biblical model of the home. Throughout Scripture we see women managing the home while also engaging in business. (**Proverbs 31**) Likewise, Lydia in the early church (**Acts 16**) is a businesswoman who takes the gospel to her home, playing an influential role in the early church. Dr. Hill rightly notes further in the paragraph that men are also called to participate in domestic roles as well as women. There is reciprocity of roles in the home, which is what Dr. Hill later calls "mutual helpfulness."

9 For a man to lead and love as Christ leads and loves the Church (**Ephesians 5:21-32**) he must be the chief servant of his home. Through incarnational service the husband will show the service of Christ He hopes for His family to trust from their hearts.

10 Dr. Hill reminds us that Biblical teaching on procreation flies in the face of cultural norms, even within the Church today. Family size has decreased consistently since the 1960s evidenced in the decreased number of children per family. Christian families struggling to have children should consider the struggle a piece of providence leading them to consider fostering and adopting. There are many couples trying to have children who cannot, as well as many children looking for families. God takes the lonely and sets them in the Christian family, making a home. (**Psalm 68:6**)

God planned to have his religion proclaimed throughout the world by human agents: “You are witnesses to these things” (**Luke 24:48**) “And has committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” (**2 Corinthians 5:19**) The success of this program and the growth of the Kingdom depend, from a human standpoint, on homes that are Christian, homes that produce Christian leadership, and that perpetuate the religion of Christ. It is for this reason that the Word of God enjoins Christians to “marry in the Lord.” The Christian girl that marries a man who has no personal interest in the Christian religion and the church is generally in for a hard time, and the same thing is true of a man who marries a godless woman. There are a few exceptions to this, but they are very few.<sup>11</sup>

Don't expect your spouse to fill a role that only Jesus can. Pursue Jesus as your FIRST LOVE (**Revelation 2:4**). Your spouse is a wonderful person, but he/she will never give you what you need from a Savior.

**-Judy Kruger**

When the honeymoon has waned and the realities of life must be met, unless there is the strong bond of hearts that are one in Christ, the way will be hard, and if there are children in the home, they will, in all probability, be indifferent to the claim that Christ has upon their souls. I have seen so many homes like this, homes where the indifference of one parent restrains the inclination of the other and of the children to take an active part in religious affairs. I have known some instances where a husband refused to let his wife, or the children, go to Sunday school or church.

There should be a very definite understanding before marriage with regard to the place that Christ will have in the home.<sup>12</sup> This will not settle itself. It will require decision, and this should not be postponed until the time when it becomes an issue. It should be settled at the very beginning.

### **The harmony, the strength, and the happiness of the home depends upon the place that Jesus Christ has in it.**

When a husband and wife are united in Christ they will establish a home that will radiate happiness and that will fulfill God's purpose in the perpetuation of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The fourth purpose of the home is to teach the children the religion of Jesus Christ. After God had given His commandments to His people, He said, “You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.” (**Deuteronomy 4:2**) He then reminds them of His dealings with the heathen nations; and in verse nine He says: “Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children.” (**Deuteronomy 4:9**).

In Deuteronomy Chapter 6, Verses 6-7 this command is repeated; “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children,” and **Joel 1:3** says, “Tell your children of it and let your children tell their children and their children another generation.” Paul, in his letter to the Ephesian Christians, said, “Fathers do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” (**Ephesians 6:4**)

Thus, we see that the divine purpose of marriage and for the home is companionship, mutual helpfulness, the perpetuation of a godly seed, and the training of children in the way that God commands.

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11 Dr. Hill connects mission in marriage, rightly clarifying marriage is not a destination but a vehicle to a greater end, namely the redemptive purposes of God in the world. You are unable to participate in this Divine purpose for your marriage if you are not equally yoked (**2 Corinthians 6:14**).

12 Every marriage and family should have a spiritual formation plan. To not have a plan is to plan to fail in spiritual leadership of your home. Take a moment to prayerfully consider a plan for prayer, scripture reading, worship, and service for your marriage and family.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. Where do you see society breaking down through the fragmenting of the family? What are specific casualties flowing downstream from the fragmenting of family?
2. How does knowing your marriage and family have a Divine purpose alter the way(s) you love and lead your family?
3. How can your companionship in marriage cultivate God's purposes through your home? Is there overflowing joy, love, and hope for others?
4. How can you be more faithful in helping and serving your spouse? What are things that hinder your helping? How can you remove them and replace them with Christ-like service?
5. God prioritizes the command, "Be fruitful and multiply." Discuss what this means for your family AND your church family considering the opportunity we have as the family of God in creating a culture of adoption and fostering.
6. Are your children more trained by the culture or by the Word and work of God? How can you be more proactive in training your children in the ways of the Lord?

**Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket – safe, dark, motionless, airless – it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.– C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, p. 121.**

## THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HOME

The responsibility of the home is set forth in substance in **Deuteronomy 6:6-9**; “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”<sup>13</sup>

This is specific and very personal. It sets forth a twofold responsibility: the responsibility to be right and the responsibility to teach and train your children for the Lord. Your primary responsibility is to be right with God. “These things shall be in your heart.”<sup>14</sup>

*How does discipling your children practically look?*

*We need to establish open discussions with our children. They need to know that there is no question they may face that can't be talked about. We need to be able to demonstrate that the Christian faith addresses all aspects of life practically and lovingly. If we can't give them a faith that makes sense to them they will struggle when that faith is confronted by the experiences away from our home. They need to not only hear this faith explained, but they need to see it demonstrated in our lives. The most powerful argument against the cultural tide will be the experience of parents working out their faith in a Christian community.*

**-Matt Terhune**

***We cannot impress children with the importance of things which we do not accept and practice.  
We cannot counsel one way and live another.***

*Does your home prioritize the discipling of your children?*

Families today are pulled in many directions and the message they hear from culture is radically different than the calling of Christ. **Many parents are so absorbed in their own lives and achievements that there is little time left for their children. Individualism has run amuck in our homes and we must get back to a home-centered life.** From children's activities, pressures on academics, importance of social status, social media and insecure parents we are slowly creating an environment of depression and anxiety.

**-Holly Youngquist**

Many parents live so hypocritically before their children that they utterly discredit their teaching. I seriously question the right of people to bring children into the world with no thought except that of feeding and clothing them, and with no interest in, or intention of, training them for God and for good and useful living.

If you would fulfill this first responsibility you must accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and honor God before your household. You must give thanks to God at the table; you must set an example in prayer; you must keep God's holy Sabbath and worship Him in His house; you must be consistent in word life.<sup>15</sup>

*The second responsibility is to teach and train your children for the Lord.* You will note that this is a personal matter—“You shall teach.” This is sadly neglected by many parents. They feel that if they send their children to Sunday school with a fair degree of regularity, they have fully discharged their religious responsibility. There was never a greater mistake. Sunday school can help you with the religious training of your children, but it can never take the place of

<sup>13</sup> Holly Youngquist adds, “This includes the high priority of children worshiping with their families during corporate worship.”

<sup>14</sup> When Dr. Hill admonishes the reader to “be right” he is not referring to winning an argument or answering a question correctly. Rather, Dr. Hill is calling Christian families to walk in righteousness, what Scripture refers to as the “paths of God” (**Psalm 25:4**) and the “paths of life” (**Psalm 16:11**, quoted by the Apostle Peter in **Acts 2:28**). Please note Dr. Hill focuses on the heart, the first place of transformation. When Jesus Christ gives believers new hearts we are empowered by God's Spirit to walk in the ways of righteousness.

<sup>15</sup> Could it be the weak faith of America's youth is not a rejection of the faith of their parents but rather a clear reflection of the faith they saw modeled growing up? We cannot impart what we do not possess and if we want children to follow Christ then parents must lead the way by following Christ themselves.

religious instruction in the home. From birth until a child is eighteen years of age, he has 96,000 waking hours.<sup>16</sup> If he attends Sunday school every Sunday from the age of three until he is eighteen, he will receive only 390 hours of instruction, assuming that the instruction period is half an hour each Sunday. If his attendance is irregular, he receives less.

Religious teaching cannot be done spasmodically. *It must be done diligently.* Religious truth must be taught like any thing else. It requires time and patience, but in the end, it brings a rich reward. A strong testimony of this is the statement of a Christian mother who said, “When children came into the home, my husband and I had to give up many things that we wanted to do in order to teach them the way of Christ and other essential things. It wasn’t always easy to do this. Now our children are grown. Two of them are ministers. The others are earnest Christians and have Christian homes. My husband and I now have time to do many of the things that we wanted to do in earlier days; and we have the added joy of seeing all of our children in Christ.”

*This teaching is to be done naturally.* “When you sit in your house and when you walk by the way.” Religious instruction should not have a strange sound to your children. You should talk to them in a natural way about God’s goodness and his gracious love. When you are together in the woods, or fields, or under the stars, you should tell your children that these beautiful things are God’s gifts to us.

*This teaching is to be persistent.* “When you lie down and when you rise up.” That means that we should close each day with thoughts of God and enter into each new one girded with his promises and strength.

*Your religion is also to be evident.* “You should bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes, and you shall write them upon the posts of your house and on your gates.” This does not mean that you are to wear a wristband of a certain sort, a frontlet between your eyes, and have a sign on your house indicating that you are a Christian. It means something harder than that. It means that the work of our hands, the things we look upon with our eyes, the thoughts we indulge shall be worthy of our Christian profession. Jesus put it this way: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” God does not want homes that are placarded with religious signs. He wants homes where the normal atmosphere is religious, where Godliness is as evident as if it were written in large letters on the gate and on the house.<sup>17</sup>

The end of all this is the development of Christian character. This is affected in the same way that plants and other things developed and improved; by patience and earnest effort. Character is not a matter of luck, chance, divine decree, or fate.

**Character is the result of a definite purpose persistently carried out, personal effort plus the power of God. Parents often ask when this training should begin. A wise mother once answered this question by saying, “Before the children are born.”**

You will appreciate the significance of this when you realize that a child comes into the world with inherited tendencies and trends which it has received from two parental lines. Some authorities claim that at birth a child’s character is from one fifth to one third formed.<sup>18</sup>

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16 Dr. Hill is assuming a child sleeps 61,680 hours his first eighteen years, over 367 weeks of his childhood- over seven years of sleep. This is a lot of math for a pamphlet focused on cultivating a Christ-centered home!

17 When we abide in Christ (**John 15**) the fruit of the Spirit will fill our homes as a (super)natural overflow of our walk with Christ (**Galatians 5**). The fruit of the Spirit will abound in a house centered on Christ, daily drawing upon the benefits of His sacrifice on our behalf.

18 Decades after Dr. Hill wrote this piece researchers continue to study the relationship of role of nature and nurture on the formation of the character of our children. BOTH play a key role!

The first seven to nine years of his life are the most vital ones. These are the years when the main pattern of life is set. The atmosphere you create, the interest you manifest, the facts you impress, the example you set, constitute the things from which the child will build the most permanent traits of character. This is the time when your children are closest to you, and also when they are most receptive. The offspring of all creatures soon go off to shift for themselves, but because a child is a soul that will outlive the stars, God puts him in the hands of parents to teach and train for the highest ends and to perpetuate his religion<sup>19</sup> on the earth.

In this early period four traits manifest themselves: love, imitation, curiosity, and activity. A child manifests love at a very early age and love is the most powerful motivation on earth. Love begets loyalty and this should be capitalized.

A child soon imitates his parents and others in the home. Little girls want to sew, cook, play “lady,” or do what they see others do. Here in the ranch country of Texas little tots ride spirited stick-horses before they can straddle real ones. They rope the cat, the dog, or anything else because they see their father riding and roping cattle. I was staying at a home some years ago and during the night snow fell. The next morning when the father started to go to the barn his little boy started to follow him. When the father saw him he said, “Son, go back. This snow is bad for you.” The little fellow replied, “It’s alright, daddy. I’m walking right in your tracks.”

### Your children are going to walk right in your tracks.

*“If we can help our children see how our deep desire to worship God in community is expressed culturally we will be helping them practice a faith that can navigate the world they are created for but not of.” -Matt Terhune*

At a very early age children begin to ask questions. They want to know many things and thrice blessed is the parent who knows how to answer well these queries. The time when they want to know something is the time when you can impress them because their little minds are wide open. You may not be able to answer the specific question, but you can give it a turn that will enable you to impart some information that will help them later on. If you do not try to help them, they will turn to others.<sup>20</sup>

I need not tell you that children are active. From the time they begin to crawl, they are into everything, pulling things down, pushing books back, or pulling them out of the lower shelves, sabotaging the workbasket or violently beating the floor with anything they can lay hands on. A little later this activity can be directed into useful channels. A child can be taught to bring things to you, to run errands, and to do little chores. Later on a little garden, a few tools and a workshop, will supply fields for useful expressional activity.

The relationship of parent and child is very intimate at this time and your words and influence are more potent for good or evil than at any other period in your child’s life. Keep him close to you. These are the years of golden opportunity. If you fail here you will see the results of it later on. Most parents wait too long to begin training their own children.

Naturally you will want to know what to teach. *Teach your child what he is.* Tell him that he is a loving soul. **Genesis 2:7** tells us, “The Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” Teach him that he has an eternal destiny, that he has a character to form and a battle to fight against inherited tendencies, temptations, pagan customs, and sins.

*Teach him the religion of Christ is the only thing that can stand the test of time, sustain him during the great crisis of life, comfort him in death, and enable him to stand unafraid before the judgment seat of Christ.*

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19 “Religion” is not used in the negative sense but the positive, so teaching and training children is not to perpetuate tradition but to propagate the purposes of the Lord through a living and active relationship with Jesus Christ.

20 Where do our children turn for direction? Google or parents? Instagram or intimate relationships with family? We will be wise to seek to serve your children by helping them any way we can, building trust capital for us to withdraw strategically as the years pass.

*Teach him who God is.* Tell him that God is his Creator, his benefactor, a loving Father, who wants to adopt him into His family. Do not instill into his mind the idea that God is a severe Being, who wants to punish him for his misdeeds, but impress upon him the fact that God loves him, wants to forgive his sins and give him power to conquer evil.

We teach our children to pray, “Our Father, who art in Heaven...” But where do they learn the character of God the Father? Simply stated, children first learn of God’s character from Dad. Your children will learn the character of God through your life and love for them.

*Teach him who Christ is.* Tell him how Christ died for him on the cross; and that when, in love, he accepts Jesus he becomes his Savior, his Helper and his Friend. Your child must not merely know something about Christ; he must know Him personally as his Savior.<sup>21</sup>

*Teach him the Word of God.*<sup>22</sup> Read the wonderful stories from the Bible rather than from some other book. The fact that the child sees the Bible in your hands and sees you reading it will make an indelible

impression. Later on, call attention to especially striking texts, or beautiful passages, and encourage him to discover, and to note such in his own Bible. Teach him to memorize passages of Scripture and some of the old hymns. Tell him that the Bible is the infinite wisdom of God, the revelation of God’s will and the only infallible rule of life. If you teach your children the Word of God they will not be led astray by false religions, or by the theories and denials of men, but will have positive convictions. They will also be strong in the hour of temptation, and when the night is dark, the words of God’s Holy Book will be “a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path.” Encourage them to practice the virtues of the Christian religion in all the relationships of life: in the home, at school and in the world.

*Teach your child his duty to God.* He must commune with God in prayer. Teach him the importance of this and teach him to pray naturally, that is, to talk to God as he would talk to his dearest friend.

*Teach him to worship God in the church.* To neglect this is to strike at the institution that Christ founded, the institution of which He is the Head. It is not enough to hustle the children off to Sunday school and pick them up before church. You must realize the importance of corporate worship and go with them joyfully to the house of God; they will regard church services no more highly than you regard them.

Because church attendance is important, God’s word says, “Not forsaking meeting together as some are in the habit of doing.” (**Hebrews 10:25**) A young Lieutenant wrote his mother. “You and dad will never know what blessings you have brought us by bringing us up in the House of the Lord.”

Dr. Hill rightly notes later in the piece that discipline must be accompanied with discipleship. Unlike teaching animal obedience, Christian parents are always shepherding a child’s heart. Discipline is love cultivating a Christ-like character in our children.

*Teach him his duty to his fellow man and to his country.*<sup>23</sup> Teach him to be fair in his estimates of his fellow man; to be fair in all of his dealings with him. Teach him that he must never be moved by prejudice or envy and never minimize the worth or the worthy actions of others. When the Lord said, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s.” he taught us that man has a responsibility to his government as well as a responsibility to his God. This should be impressed upon a child early in life. It will save him from much confusion of thought as to right and wrong, truth and error. He will know the truth, and in every hour of need can stand uncompromisingly upon it.

21 How do you keep the gospel at the center of your home? Please see the opening article and note how Job sets a helpful paradigm. His daily sacrifices for his children (**Job 1:1-5**) look like our daily praying with your family for forgiveness. Daily gospel dependency displays the centrality of the cross in our home and assures our family of the security we have in the love of our Father and finished work of Jesus Christ.

22 To teach God’s word parents need to be growing in knowing God’s word themselves! Do you have a plan to know and grow in God’s word? Visit Richly Dwelling or other Bible reading plans to grow in this grace: [www.RichlyDwelling.com](http://www.RichlyDwelling.com)

23 Patriotism is a godly characteristic but it should never be elevated above loving neighbors and nations without partiality. We must teach the love of Christ as we resist the tribalism of today’s culture. Loving and serving the country in which we are placed is a faithful response to God’s mission to love all nations.

*Teach him prompt obedience.* Respect for authority begins in the home. This is the point of the fifth commandment, “Honor your father and your mother.” You teach a child to obey just as you teach a bird-dog or a horse.<sup>24</sup> It takes time and patience, but you had better spend a little time now than to shed many tears later. The problem children of today, the children that constitute that great multitude of juvenile delinquents, are children who were never taught to obey in the home.<sup>25</sup> Having learned to disregard parental authority, they assume that they can disregard civil authority with impunity, and in most instances, they have no regard for the authority of Almighty God. It is easy to follow the line of least resistance and let children do pretty much as they please, but such a course is sure to bring sorrow to the child and untold misery to his parents. “A child left to himself brings shame to his mother.” (**Proverbs 29:15**)

We have a striking illustration of this in the life of David. Adonijah, his son, sought to take away his throne. He gathered the people together and sought to frustrate David’s purpose to have Solomon succeed him as king. You wonder how this son, to whom David had given so much, could have so little regard for his father’s authority, especially, since his father was the king. The answer is given to us in **I Kings 1:6**, “His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, ‘Why hast thou done so?’” He never corrected his son. He never taught him to respect his wishes and his authority, and the result was sorrow to the father in the closing days of his life and death to Adonijah for treason. (**I Kings 2:22-25**)

It may be necessary in this process of training to discipline a child. The word of God so teaches us. “Discipline your son and he will give you rest, he will give delight to your heart.” (**Proverbs 29:17**) This need not be necessarily severe. There is a vast difference between discipline and brutality. In most instances it can be done by withholding some privilege, or by some other plan that associates disobedience and a penalty in the child’s mind. Discipline should be administered without anger and abuse, and in a measure that is commensurate with the offence. When this is done few children will resent it. Parents should be sure that a child is guilty of an act before he is punished. Children are exceedingly sensitive to injustice; and while, in many instances they are silent, they bitterly resent being punished for something that they did not do.

“Don’t be fearful of discussing culture that you disagree with. If you do this it will show your children that there is no part of their culture that the Christian faith cannot confidently engage, and it can possibly create common ground for relationships with non-Christian friends. If you have an intellectually curious or rebellious child this will help them to navigate their doubts and fears and see how their faith can thoughtfully interact with the culture. Now more than ever we will not be able to keep our children away from non-Christian ideas and philosophies. The more we are able to thoughtfully and faithfully discuss them with our children the better the chance they will see how the Christian faith makes sense of the world they live in.”

**-Matt Terhune**

Many parents will tell a child that if he does a certain thing he will be punished, and when the child disobeys them, instead of punishing the child, will sternly say, “The very next time you do that I am going to punish you.” The child then concludes that in all probability he will escape punishment for all future acts of disobedience.

### **When discipline is deserved it should not be delayed.**

You should not make demands upon your children that are unreasonable, and you should take time to talk things over with them and let them know why you require certain things of them. If discipline is necessary, let the child

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24 Dr. Hill’s analogy is culturally shaped. The imagery is humorous on the one hand, but falls short overall. Respect for authority manifests in honoring father and mother and is essential, but this is not the same as training an animal. Honor comes from the heart. Obedience is merely external conformity.

25 Dr. Hill rightly connects the fracturing of fundamentals within family with the fragmentation of society. Christian parents must shepherd the hearts of their children toward honor in the home so they live honorably outside the home. Recall Carl Caton’s comments in his introduction, “*Social scientists suggest that our values and virtues are transmitted in families, generationally. They posit that values and virtues are transmitted ‘along lines of affection.’ In layman’s terms, that means that more than any other way, kids get their values and virtues from their parents.*”

clearly understand why it is necessary and the nature of the offence. Love for a child is no excuse for failure to discipline him. “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”<sup>26</sup> (**Hebrews 12:11**)

When a child is from seven to nine years old, if you have met your responsibility well, he knows the main facts of conduct. From this time on your problem is to motivate him to do the things that are right, and to do them because they are right. He will be subjected to many temptations and will often amaze you by some of the ideas he expresses, most of which are echoes of some older child at school or in the neighborhood. You should pay careful attention to your child’s health. See that he has proper and nourishing food and proper clothes. Have occasional “checkups” by your doctor and dentist.

Don’t take the children too seriously from eight to sixteen.<sup>27</sup> They are undergoing great changes at this period of early and late adolescence. Often you will not understand them and more often they will not understand you. Keep them very close to you, but don’t coddle them. Try to interest them in music, plays, and parties of the right sort. But above all else don’t let them keep exceedingly late hours and run wild on the streets. Spend some money to make things interesting for them. This will be a wise investment for it will keep them off the streets at night and discourage loafing in pool halls, beer joints and other places of bad influence.

From sixteen to twenty-one your approach should be different. Your children now have a moral and a spiritual responsibility that they should be led to recognize and accept. If they have been trained well, they will do this in a happy way; if not, in painful ignorance and uncertainty, they will reflect your failure. Ordinarily, children do not break down at sixteen; they merely reveal the neglect of parents to teach and train them in the earlier period of their lives.

**Your children are at your mercy. When you look into their little faces, remember that they are utterly dependent upon you; and resolve that, God helping you, you will not fail them.**

To fail to teach and train a child for God is like sending him on a long journey without food, turning him out to face the chill of winter with insufficient clothing, setting him adrift upon a treacherous sea without chart or compass. To fail in this is to bring sorrow to the child and to yourself. I know of no sorrow more bitter than that which comes to parents when they see their child go wrong. This is especially severe when they realize that there were no prayers in the home, no frank and earnest talks about the pitfalls of sin, that the child was never taught the way of Christ, nor that “man’s chief end is to glorify God,” and that no example of Godly living was set before him.<sup>28</sup>

Not long ago a young man of eighteen was being taken to the penitentiary. His mother asked the guard if she could talk to the boy apart from the other prisoners. Her request was granted and, with tears streaming down her cheeks, she told him of her grief. When she had finished her talk, the young man said, “Mother, I am going to the pen, but you are sending me there. You remember when dad was dying, and I was just a little fellow, he asked you to raise me right and told me that he wanted me to meet him in heaven. You told him that you would and for about six months you were very close to me. Then you started going at night to ‘Honky-Tonks’ and I thought it was alright, because you were my mother. Later on, you took me along and bought whiskey for me. I thought this must be

26 Rev. Fuller adds, “Consider the difference between “control” and “influence.” **I Corinthians 13** has a lot to say about the tone with which authority in the home is to be exercised. I can’t control my kids, but I can control what kind of parent I am. And even though I can’t *control* my kids, I can *influence* them. Here’s what I am figuring out: control them for a moment, or influence and shape the character of my children for a lifetime.”

27 Matt Terhune adds, “Do be respectful of the thoughts, ideas, and interests of your children. Look for ways to encourage these interests, and possibly opportunities for you to participate with them. This may take your time, and your money, but it will be an investment you won’t regret. Often these times of playing together open the door to deeper conversations and teaching moments. Be prepared to help them see the spiritual aspects of what they enjoy.”

28 Leading your family to live for the glory of God must be a priority seen as well as heard by our children. Do your children see you enjoying God and living for His glory in all of life?

alright, because you were my mother. I was inexperienced and believed in you. I kept going in the wrong way. Now I am going to the pen, but I want you to go home and live like dad wanted you to. When I come back, I am going to live so that I can meet him in heaven.”

When your last hour comes and your eyes grow dim in death, it will be a source of comfort, beyond measure, to know that you left your children the priceless heritage of Christian faith and the example of a consistent Christian life. These will survive all other legacies and when the night is dark and storms arise, these will shine as beacons to guide them to the harbor of the blest.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. Why is it significant for parents to live what they hope to see in their children? What are specific hurdles for you in this endeavor? How can they be removed?
2. What are you teaching your children, either directly or indirectly? Which topics to teach admonished by Dr. Hill stand out to you? Why?
3. How can you more intentionally teach children the basic tenets of Christian faith? The New City Catechism is featured in the appendix with other resources.
4. Dr. Hill describes discipline in inviting ways as he rightly patterns it after the discipline the heavenly Father gives His people. Why is disciplining our children difficult? How does the call to disciple as well as discipline our children change how we shepherd the hearts of our children?
5. What are downstream consequences of not teaching children who they are, who God is, His word, His love and work in Christ, and how we rightly respond with our lives? How does the fragmenting of fundamentals in families lead to fracturing of society?

### ***The Prayer of Saint Francis***

***“O Lord, make me an instrument of Thy Peace! Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon; Where there is discord, harmony; Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope; Where there is darkness, light, And where there is sorrow, joy.***

***Oh Divine Master, grant that I, May not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
To be understood as to understand; To be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned; And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”***

## THE PERILS OF THE HOME

Every worthwhile institution has its perils and the home is no exception. Our homes are imperiled as never before in the history of America.<sup>29</sup> The ratio of divorces to marriages is appalling.

**Thousands that are not divorced by legal action are separated in heart and life and are held together only by a regard for the sacredness of the marriage or because of the effect that separation would have on the children.**

In the light of history, the disintegration of the home can mean but one thing: doom for our nation. A distinguished authority in speaking of the collapse of Greece and Rome said, “The duties and responsibilities of family life fell into disfavor among many of the best, the ablest, and the most attractive women. The stock deteriorated and the fruits of centuries of magnificent civilization were cast away.”<sup>30</sup>

What are some of the perils of the American home? First, *there is the peril of a bad beginning.*

**Many homes are doomed from the start, because the fundamentals that are essential to a stable home have been ignored.**

The marriage ceremony of many churches warns that marriage “is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly and in the fear of God.” This is sound counsel, yet many rush into matrimony with no appreciation of its sacred character or of the grave responsibility that it imposes.<sup>31</sup>

Next to the acceptance of Jesus Christ as one’s Savior, this is the most serious step in life, yet there are many that are swept off of their feet by good looks or physical attractiveness and never stop to ascertain whether the other qualities that are essential to make a home are also there. God does not put a premium on ugliness. A man would naturally want to marry a woman that is attractive, and a woman would have the same inclination with regard to a man; but if this is the primary consideration, when beauty fades disappointment follows.<sup>32</sup>

**...for the children of today are the America of tomorrow.**

Some marry to better themselves materially. The essentials of love, compatibility and other things are thus subordinated, and the result is a relationship that is artificial and therefore a home that seldom, if ever, fulfills its divine mission. The fact that one or both of the contracting parties has wealth should not preclude a happy home if the other conditions for domestic happiness are met.

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29 This was published for the third time in 1944! Oh, how the perils have increased with the advancement of technology, the Internet, and social media.

30 Taken from Samuel Batton- *If America Fails: Our National Mission and Our Possible Future- 1922*

31 Today people justify not rushing into marriage through cohabitation. This is an unbiblical and unwise choice. Data shows marriages beginning in cohabitation are more likely to divorce ([PEW social trends](#), 2019) and God’s word clearly teaches Christians are to live as brothers and sisters in Christ until they exchange vows before God. Cohabiting is playing marriage before God’s time, an unwise choice when considering the foundation for a faithful and fruitful marriage.

32 Years of marriage alter the exterior landscape of our appearance but true beauty is enhanced over time. God’s word prioritizes the cultivation of inner beauty over external appearance. We see this in His choice of David as king (**1 Samuel 16:7**) and teaching in the early Church (**1 Peter 3:3-4**). Wise marriages celebrate the cultivation of inner beauty.

In many instances, little or no attention is paid to background. I do not refer to the matter of wealth, or the kind of house, or neighborhood in which one lives. I refer to the stock from which he or she comes. What kind of people are they? A little caution in this matter, before one becomes too deeply involved, can save a world of sorrow later on. Parental traits are transmitted and are strong. Industry, sobriety, clean living, dishonesty, insanity or marked physical weaknesses will persist. You cannot wipe out family background with a marriage ceremony. If the background is unfortunate, in all probability your marriage will also prove unfortunate. There are exceptions to this I am sure, but they are few and far between. The results that we see in bad breeding in cattle are tragic when they occur in men.<sup>33</sup>

“Marriage is part of the creation. It is as basic to human relationships as gravity is to the physical world. Without the order of gravity, the world would fall to pieces. The same is true with marriage and human relationships.” - Bob Fuller

Many fail to seriously consider the matter of temperament. Some dispositions naturally clash. People who are moody, selfish, dictatorial and overbearing during courtship are generally more so after marriage. The home must begin right: with prayer, with holy living, with mutual respect, and with due regard for the rights of each other.

There is also the *peril that parents will fail to accept the responsibility of Parenthood*. Bringing children into the world is not the end of marriage. This marks the beginning of a parent’s most serious responsibility.

There is the *peril of absorption*. Many parents are so absorbed in lodge, club, golf, bridge, luncheons and other things, that they have no time left for their children. Many men are giving themselves unreservedly to the acquisition of wealth in order that they may leave an inheritance for their children. God enjoins men to be “diligent in business,” but he also adds, “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

**Your child does not need an inheritance in the future as much as he needs your guidance and help now. To fail to give him this will probably mean that any material inheritance that he receives in the future will soon be squandered.**

**There is no other thing in the world that is more vital than bringing your child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.**

No achievement or measure of success in the world can compensate for failure here. You cannot excuse yourself before the bar of God for such neglect. Through the prophet **Ezekiel (33:8)** God said, “If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.”

If God speaks thus with regard to those outside of the family circle, you can be well assured that he will reckon with you if you fail your children in this important matter. If the Master cast out the servant that hid his talent in a napkin, surely those who have been guilty of a greater sin cannot escape his condemnation. If you fail here, the blood of your children will witness against you in the last day.

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33 God’s grace alone is able to break the cycles of sin passed down from the father. This redemptive reality for humanity is one of many distinctions between humanity and cattle. In Christ, the grace of God is sufficient and His strength will be displayed through our struggles.

If you fail here you will feel the effects of it in your own life and you will also contribute to the destruction of our American way of life, **for the children of today are the America of tomorrow**. I cannot over emphasize the importance of religion in the home. Don't neglect this now and realize its importance when it is too late.<sup>34</sup>

A group of parents, in a Midwestern town, became concerned over the juvenile situation in their community and decided to face the matter seriously and frankly. They met regularly for several weeks and then formulated some resolutions, which they solemnly pledged themselves to put into practice. They said in part: "We realize the startling seriousness of the home situation in our modern suburban life. Even our moral ideals are threatened by the reckless speeding up of this automotive age, with its resulting nervous tension, overstrain, and restless, hectic city living. Too often we find luxury breeds self-indulgence, disregard of the rights of others, and a thoughtless life of mere sense—level pleasure with its subtle sex-complex. We therefore come to the conviction that we must make the effort to reconstruct religion in our modern homes, whatever it may cost us in curtailed selfishness and individual preference. In the spirit of a fresh consecration to both, we pledge ourselves to a higher level of home loyalty.

"We recognize that the rights and welfare of our children must have the right of way. We admit we have nothing to live for more important than this. If we have been giving the right of way to personal comfort, social ambition, business profits, or our personal pleasures and self-indulgence, this must stop—for the children's sake. If 'individualism has run amuck' in our homes, we must somehow get back to a home-centered life. We will plan for more sharing of life with our children, cost what it may in sacrifice of selfish adult interests.

Will you pass authentic faith to your children? Considering current challenges, in order to provide a Christian-faith legacy parents must identify creative ways by which they can transmit their faith to their children.

-Antonius Alvarez

"We know this task is hopeless without religion, which must be the motive of it all, its inner Spirit and power. We therefore face the necessity of a vital personal religion, frankly acknowledged and honestly lived with our children. We pledge ourselves to find afresh the high inspirations of the Bible in the light of modern learning. We agree to revive the simple prayer custom of Jesus, at least to bless our family meals with the grace of thanksgiving. We pledge cooperation with the Church and its allies which are striving to raise up a generation of youth who can meet victoriously the subtle temptations of present-day living.

"In thus resolving to rebuild the temple of home religion, we seek not simply to restore a neglected altar in a corner shrine, apart from ordinary living, but to carry the sacred flame into all our home life, making holy all its work and play, its laughter and its tears, its mutual sacrifice, its inexpressible joys."

**We might well paraphrase the words of Jesus here and seriously ask, what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his own (child)?<sup>35</sup>**

There is the *peril of wrong associations*. Many parents, for social prestige, or for other reasons bring people of undesirable character into their homes. Children are easily impressed by these types and absorb their words and ideas to a degree that parents fail to appreciate. These impressions are made at a time when their habits of life are being set, and it is difficult to ever eradicate them. Two instances of this stand out clearly in my mind. In the first, a man was brought into a home for business ends and lived there for a few months. A very fine boy was in the home, who naturally came under the influence of this visitor. The man was well educated and attractive but professed to be

34 Judy Kruger adds, "'Self-care' is a popular buzzword recently, but here's the thing: if I make Jesus the love of my life and the driving desire of my heart, and if I seek Him in his Word first thing every day (and yes...that has meant choosing to change my sleep schedule but if Jesus did it [see **Mark 1:35**] I want to), He will become my self-care. He tells me when I need rest and what needs attention in my life. He gives me the ability to love my spouse and my family with His love. He makes a difference in my day, my life, and my family. If I don't surrender my day to Jesus and don't establish His authority every morning, my default is my own version of self-care—self-love, self-absorption, even self-loathing. The best way that I can love God, love my spouse, love my children, and love other people is to seek Him every morning in His Word with everything I've got. I ask Jesus to be my absolute joy, strength and delight; that frees me from expecting any other person to fill those needs."

35 The paraphrase is from **Mark 8:36**. I am unable to identify the source for the lengthy quote in the above paragraph.

an agnostic. He did not ridicule the Bible and the religion of Christ; he simply said that religion and reason could not stand together and set at naught the things of God. He gave the boy books written by atheists, which he read. The man went his way, and nothing came of the venture that had brought him into the home, but the boy's faith was blighted. Later in life, because of the Christian foundation laid in his home, he came back to Christ, but the intervening years were unfruitful, and many shadows fell across the pathway of his life.

The other instance is just as tragic. For business ends, a brilliant, but dissolute, man was introduced into a home. There was a lovely girl there who was impressed by his good manners and his brilliant conversation. The members of the family failed to sense what was going on until too late. They were married, and the honeymoon had scarcely begun when this lovely girl realized her terrible mistake. Drunkenness, women, and neglect entered into the picture, because her life was threatened and God's holy law was violated, she was compelled to divorce him. I might multiply instances of this kind.

I know men who use every precaution to keep the strain of their cattle free from inferior blood, yet let their children go out with companions about whom they know absolutely nothing and thus open the way for unfortunate marriages. Surely a man's interest in the soul of his child ought to be greater than his interest in a dumb brute.<sup>36</sup> Many feel that the home is not modern unless drinking, gambling and kindred things are indulged. Homes built on bottles will fail; those built on Bibles will endure. Only sorrow can come from bad influences in the home.

A young man was sent to the penitentiary. His mother sent a Bible to the chaplain and asked him to give it to him. When the chaplain gave him his mother's message and offered him the Bible, he said, "Take it back to her and tell her that the first drink I ever tasted I took from her hand and that I learned to gamble in her home."

**The world and the devil will teach your children enough of evil without your help. Your responsibility is to put it into their hearts the things that will enable them to withstand the destructive things that they must face.**

There is the *peril of intermeddlers*. The Bible calls them "tattlers" and "busybodies." It would be difficult to estimate the trouble people like this have caused, or the number of homes that they have wrecked. Some of these come in the guise of friends. They assume a very sad air and great concern, then by implication, subtle suggestion or statement, they sow the seeds of mistrust and jealousy. Generally, these are people whose own homes have been wrecked. Run the gossip out that tells you what he or she would do under your circumstances; then fumigate the room. If you have domestic problems, go to your minister or some reliable friend for advice, and do this before the situation becomes acute.

Some relatives cause trouble in a home. Often fathers and especially mothers want to direct the home life of their children after they have married. This is not good. Young couples will welcome suggestions that are made in a kindly way; but they will resent dictation and rightly so. They are mature and have to work out their problems themselves. They will make mistakes, but so did we. They will learn, in due time, many things that they would never learn, if they have to depend on someone else to think for them. Jesus says with regard to marriage (**Mark 10:7-8**), "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." So they are no longer two but one flesh." Since this is God's way, it is exceedingly wicked for anyone to seek to alter it and to disrupt a home.

**There are few situations that arise that cannot be met, and problems are not new to God, nor is He wanting in power.**

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36 Dr. Hill draws again from a ranching analogy, asking if caring for the soul of your child is more important than caring for cattle. Today's equivalent would be to ask if our child's interest is greater than the interest of parents in their material possessions, vocational success, entertainment, or recreational activities.

It may take time and patience, in some instances, to straighten things out, but if a husband and wife will kneel together in prayer each night and honestly seek God's wisdom and His help and try to discover God's will, the answer will surely come. If either is unwilling to seek and to do God's will, the situation will, in all probability, grow worse.<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps the *greatest peril is that you will leave God out of your home*. Through Moses, God warned against this. In the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, verse ten, God tells them of unearned prosperity that shall come to them. In verses eleven and twelve He says, "When thou shalt have eaten and be full, then beware, lest thou forget the Lord thy God."

**The hope of America and of the world is the Christ-centered home.  
You should never fail to exalt Christ there.**

Not long ago I married two lovely young people. They told me that they had resolved to read the Bible and pray together every night, which they did. In a few months, the husband had to go on foreign service, but before he left, he said to his little wife, "We will be twelve thousand miles apart, but every night at a certain hour we will be together in prayer." You can predict the future of a home like that.

**If a husband and wife pray together each night, they will never get far apart. If you honestly give Jesus Christ the right of way in your home and exalt Him in your life, you will be blessed.**

There will be times that try your souls, times of trial, sickness, hours of discouragement and the lonely hour of death. Only the strength of the living God can carry you through these hard experiences. If both are in Christ it will be well, for it is hard to bear life's burdens alone.

You should both be in the same church, unless some principle is involved. Ordinarily, the one who is less active should go with the one who is more active. When parents are in different churches and the children are sent to different Sunday schools, the children are confused and often wind up by not going to any church. Your membership should be in a church that honors Jesus Christ. Do not tolerate a minister, or a church, that does not believe and teach that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, that sin is guilty and is deadly and destructive to body and soul, that Jesus, by His death on the cross, made atonement for sin, that when we accept Him by faith our sins are forgiven, that He rose from the dead in bodily form and now makes intercession for us at the right hand of God, that the Holy Spirit is given to teach, purify and empower us, that God will judge the world in righteousness by His Son, and that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Form the habit of attending church together and, if possible, sitting together as a family. The children will never forget these hours spent in the house of God with you.

Too many of our people have left God out of their personal lives and out of their homes. Many who were reared in Christian homes have side-tracked religion and have been swept away by the current of pagan social life and live in a way that God will never approve. No voice is raised in prayer, the Bible is unread, they seldom enter the door of the church and apparently have no interest in the spiritual welfare of their children. They little realize how cheaply they are selling the spiritual heritage that came to them through blood and tears. They do not realize that disobedience to God's express command must bring sorrow in the end. These perils to the home must be met with resolution if America is to survive.

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<sup>37</sup> "It is hard to make an enemy of the one whom you make an ally in faith on a daily basis." Dr. Gary Chapman, 2019 Five Love Languages Conference at FPC commenting on how couples initiate positive change through building rhythms of prayer.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. Dr. Hill says the first peril of the home is a marriage that has drifted apart, that while not formally divorced many are informally divorced through spouses drifting. Why do marriages drift away from intimacy? Has yours? Do you want to change this reality? Reach out for help or see the resources listed in the Appendixes.
2. Another peril for the Christian home are parents rejecting the fundamentals of faith for the home, particularly discipling our children. Why do families fumble the responsibility to form faith in the home? How can yours pick the ball up and begin discipleship freshly?
3. Dr. Hill notes the danger of self-absorption and how it opposes Christ-centeredness. Is your home more Christ-centered or self-centered? What are three ways you can move toward a more Christ-centered home?
4. Dr. Hill notes the peril of poor influencers in your home. Who or what influences your home with the most power of formation? Netflix or the Gospel? Entertainment or Jesus Christ? Social media or the Church? The news or Scripture? How can Christ and His Word influence your home more substantially?
5. Pray diligently for the Lord's clear presence in your home as you trust the promises of the Lord with all your life, living on the power of His Spirit in all you do. Can you build rhythms of prayer with your spouse and children?

### **Antonius Alvarez articulates how Jesus Christ is the “cornerstone of our *family foundation*”:**

Regarding the construction of our spiritual homes, Jesus accurately mentioned: “*The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock*” (**Matthew 7:25** [NRSV]). In this sense, even though the storms against our families are many and constant, let us not surrender our faith, instead, let us trust in the fact that we have faithfully built upon our Cornerstone Jesus Christ who is “...*the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...*” (**Hebrews 12:2** [NRSV]).

In today's flooded electronic age, parents face countless obstacles to effectively transmit their Christ-centered faith to their children. Considering these current challenges, in order to provide a Christian-faith legacy, parents must identify creative ways by which they can transmit their faith to their children. One of the ways in which parents can successfully transmit their faith is by having continuous devotionals with them. By having devotionals at a tender age, children can develop a genuine and lasting view of the meaning of having faith in the risen Christ (*c.f.*, **Deuteronomy 4:9; 11:19, Proverbs 22:6** and **Ephesians 6:4**). Subsequently, the continuous exposure to the Scriptures will create a faith-oriented relationship between the parents and their children, which in turn will produce a faith context in which together as a family unit will be able to *worship Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior!*

## THE HOME THAT ENDURES

The book of **Proverbs (12:7)** says, “The house of the righteous will stand.” The same statement is made by the Master in **Matthew 7:25**; “And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.”

These two passages assure us that Godliness is essential to an enduring home, the righteous are those who by divine grace sustain a right relationship to God and a right relationship to each other. The house of the righteous is the home where these relationships are expressed in right living in a right atmosphere.

There must be a right relationship to God, there is no sound reason that any man or woman can give for refusing to accept Jesus Christ as Savior.<sup>38</sup> In most cases the excuses that are offered are weak pretenses, and are used to cover up an unwillingness to give up some sin or indulgence. No one can question the fact that the Christian life is the best life.<sup>39</sup> The difference between the Christian nations and those that are non-Christian is due to the fact that one group has Christ and Christian practices and the other does not.

“Do you present a perfect home when inside you are drowning? The home that endures will be Christ-centered, making faith a priority. The gospel frees us to have integrity between what we present to the world and practice in our homes.”

-Holly Youngquist

“The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green.”

**Psalms 92:12-14**

A young man, who was not a Christian, opened the Family Bible one day and on the flyleaf read these words written many years before: “Cursed is he who breaks the line of a Godly ancestry.” He closed the Bible and said, “For generations my people have all been Christians. I too will be one.” It is a fearful thing to let the line of a Godly ancestry die in you.

No one can fail to realize that a man can live better with the help of God than he can in his own strength; and no parent should withhold from the other and from the children the privilege of a Christian home. Someone has truly said, “A home without a family altar is like a body without a heart, a temple without a shrine, and a world without a God.”<sup>40</sup>

Not long ago a young man came to plan for his wedding. He was an exceedingly fine type of man. He stood for the highest and best things, but he was not a Christian. He was going to marry a lovely Christian woman. I talked with him about his future and about Christ. Before he left, he said, “The woman I am going to marry is a Christian. I accept Jesus Christ as my Savior and I want to join the church with her. We will begin life together with a Christian home.” If every couple would begin their home life this way, and if those in homes already established would accept Christ and His way of life, domestic happiness would ensue and the future of America would be assured.<sup>41</sup>

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38 Our prayer is for God to soften the hearts of all who read this pamphlet with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Only when His love touches our hearts can we show His love to our spouse and families.

39 God’s design for our lives and love will always prove to be more fruitful than rejecting His design. Christians respond to God’s grace through joyful obedience to God’s word, understanding it is God’s best for His people.

40 Family worship and faith formation is most fruitful when you establish a place where your family prays, reads scripture, and speak of God’s grace. If you are lacking for ideas where to begin then I suggest you begin with the kitchen table. Extend a meal and prayer into a 5-10 minute discussion of grace, the gospel, and God’s faithfulness. Having an intentional place and plan will empower you in setting time for rhythms of grace toward deepening the spiritual intimacy of your family.

41 Do you see a major theme of both Scripture and this booklet? As the home goes, so goes neighborhoods and the nation! One of the most missional things you can do is re-center your home on Christ, His work, and Scripture.

**The home that endures must be Christ-centered. There will be problems that only the wisdom of God can solve. There will be times when only the strength of God will enable you to stand. There will be days when only a living faith will sustain you.**

If your home is Christian, your children will receive impressions that will enable them to face the world undaunted and unafraid.<sup>42</sup>

There is no greater office that God has given to man than that of being the spiritual leader of his household. There is no memory more precious, no tie that binds the family more closely together and no influence more enduring than family prayers. John G. Paton, that great apostle to the New Hebrides,<sup>43</sup> writes of the prayer life in his home:

“Thus the day started and each one was girded with strength to resist the evil which he might be compelled to face that day. The day was begun with the consciousness that God was near.”

None of us that has ever read “The Cotter’s Saturday Night;”<sup>44</sup> will easily forget the picture the Scottish poet draws of the cotter’s evening prayer:

**“Then kneeling down to Heaven’s eternal King,  
The saint, the father, and the husband prays;  
Hope “springs exulting on triumphant wing,”  
That thus they all shall meet in future days;  
There ever bask in uncreated rays,  
No more to sigh or shed the bitter tear.  
..... From scenes like these old Scotia’s grandeur springs,  
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad. “**

It is true that from homes like that “old Scotia’s grandeur” came. These were the homes that gave to the world John Knox, the Covenanters, and men of rock-ribbed piety. This was the kind of home on which our forefathers built this nation and to which Roger Babson says we owe our national prosperity.<sup>45</sup>

Some years ago, the Wall Street Journal published an editorial that I shall never forget. It said, “What America needs is a revival of piety, the kind mother and father used to that counted it good business to stop for family prayers before breakfast right in the middle of harvest; that quit work half an hour earlier on Thursday night so as to get the chores done and get to prayer-meeting. That is what we need now to clean this country of graft and of greed, petty and big, of worship of fine houses and big lands, high office and social functions.”<sup>46</sup>

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42 Forming faith of children at home will form them for faithfulness in the world.

43 **John Gibson Paton** (24 May 1824 – 28 January 1907), born in Scotland, was a [Protestant missionary](#) to the [New Hebrides](#) Islands of the South Pacific. He brought to the indigenous people of the New Hebrides education and Christianity. He developed small industries such as hat making, too. Paton advocated strongly against slavery that involved kidnapping the natives and forcing them to work in New Zealand and elsewhere. (*Adapted from JGP Wikipedia entry*)

44 This is a poem written by the Scottish poet Robert Burns, often considered a pioneer to the Romantic Movement.

45 Roger Babson was a successful entrepreneur and economist in Dr. Hill’s day. He is famous for many things, not least of which is predicting the stock market crash of 1929.

46 The *Wall Street Journal* would never state this truth so clearly today! But this does not negate the reality our country longs for Christian homes to flourish. **Proverbs 11:10** states, “When it goes well with the righteous the city rejoices!”

“Ask the Lord to give you delight—delight in Him and delight in your family (**Psalm 37:23, Psalm 35:9, Psalm 119:16**, and MANY more). Ask Him for joy in your family (**Nehemiah 8:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17**). Avoid criticism. Laugh together often. “**-Judy Kruger**

**A prayer in the morning for God's protection and blessing for each member of the family as he goes forth to school or work or to the duties of the home, and a prayer at the close of day, binds hearts and homes together like a chain of gold.<sup>47</sup>**

One of the happiest hours in a Christian parent's experience is the time when the children give their hearts to Christ and unite with the church. If you have trained them well and have kept this before them as a supreme objective, they will do this as naturally as a flower opens in the spring. When that time comes some parents tell the child that he does not know enough and should wait. This might be true of a very young child, but it is a serious reflection on the parents if a child has reached the age of nine or ten and not been taught the simple things that are required for church membership.

When a child expresses a desire to unite with the church don't tell him that he is not good enough. No one is saved by his goodness. The Bible makes this very clear. **Ephesians 2:8-9**, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast."

**"But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy" (Titus 3:4-5a)**

**Ezekiel 33:12**, "The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression." We are saved by accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior. Jesus said to the woman who was a sinner, "Your faith has saved you."

When you observe an interest in this matter on the part of a child, or when he expresses a desire to unite with the church, ascertain whether this is born of a love for Jesus, and if there is the desire to be like Him, and a readiness to do His will. These are the fundamentals of Christian discipleship. It is a high privilege to lead your child to Christ, but many parents are missing the greatest thing in life by failing to do this. So many are wonderful in so many ways, kind, thoughtful and generous, but are leaving this most vital matter to someone else or to blind chance.<sup>48</sup>

Some time ago a very earnest minister said, "I should like to ask if we are not missing the mark. Losing our golden opportunity, when as we seek to leave our children the very best inheritance, as we long for a better citizenship and a more consecrated church membership, we busy ourselves with many other things and let the stream run dry at the fundamentals of the Christian life, or because, having time, there is something in our personal life that spoils the atmosphere of prayer and Christian living in the home? Let us have worship in our homes that our Christian lives may be deepened and strengthened and unfolded, and let us have Christian living in our homes that worship may not be impossible."

I cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of religion in the home.

**Every home will be severely shaken at times and only these homes that are built upon a positioned Christian faith will stand.**

When God is honored in a home and Jesus Christ has preeminence, the Sabbath is kept holy, and the great questions of time and eternity are discussed, and every important decision made in prayer.

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47 Do you begin every day with a cup of coffee? Do you lock your doors at night, possibly setting an alarm? Prayer is more important and more formative than your morning coffee and provides more security than locking your doors and setting your home alarm. Let's pray together as a family!

48 Do you know how to lead someone to Christ? For direction and tools please see Appendix C.

Your spouse and your children need to be able to trust that their words are safe with you. Resist the urge to discuss family matters with others. Tell the Lord first, perhaps seek advice from a trusted godly friend, seek professional help if needed—but not other moms, your girlfriends, or your extended family.

*“Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.” Psalm 141:3*

*-Judy Kruger*

*In the home that endures there should be right relationships with each other.* From the very beginning a husband and wife should be pals.<sup>49</sup> You should not hold back anything from each other. You will grow together, or you will grow apart. It is well to talk things over: household affairs, business, schools, vacations and other things. If there are matters on which you do not agree, let them lie over for a while. They are not as important as peace and harmony. I knew a young couple that spent a little while each evening, after the children were

put to bed, in talking things over and planning for the future. Many of their dreams never came true, but they had the joy of planning and, later on, the greater joy of seeing each child grow up and establish a Christian home.

*The atmosphere of the home should be cheerful.*<sup>50</sup> You owe your children a happy childhood. The world will give them plenty of sorrows. An atmosphere of gloom has a most depressing effect upon children. It follows them through life, and instinctively they want to get away from it. Only cheerful topics should be discussed at the table and children should be sent to bed happy. One of the most destructive forces in a home is fault finding, incessant complaint, nagging. The subtle peril of this lies in the fact that often it is begun with the best of intentions, but before one is aware, it has become a fixed habit. Children may become hardened to this and patiently endure it, but they will soon get out where it won't be heard. This can be overcome by determination and prayer.

If a child has done wrong, a quiet, positive talk or, if necessary, some sensible punishment will be more effective than the scolding of a lifetime. The Koreans have a proverb which says, “Time and patience turns the mulberry leaf to silk.”<sup>51</sup> We can profit by this.

Most parents do not appreciate the part that environment and atmosphere play in the life of a child. He begins to learn almost as soon as he is born. All that he sees and hears and feels and experiences become a part of himself, and so, to a large degree, determines his future. As important as it is teaching, it is not as vital as the impressions that a child receives from his surroundings and from the atmosphere in which he is reared. Because these impressions are voluntary, they are deep-rooted and enduring. Because of this parents should be exceedingly careful in speech and behavior. The little ears are quick to pick up words and their minds are quick to receive impressions. In far too many homes the atmosphere is charged with criticism. Neighbors are dissected, characters are besmirched, unworthy motives are imputed.

*“Choose this day whom you will serve... as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:15*

The soul of a child is exceedingly sensitive. When they hear this, sometimes they are deeply hurt because someone they admire has been wronged. Sometimes they are mystified and wonder if there is anything good in the world. Sometimes they are hardened, but always they are affected. There was a man who was very careful in his speech at home, but often profane elsewhere. One day he was talking to some men at his office and gave vent to a torrent of profanity. His little girl had entered at this point, unobserved. He turned to behold a look of surprise and pain upon her little face as she fled from the room. His conscience smote him, and he said, “how can I ever win her love and respect again?”

<sup>49</sup> Your spouse should be your best friend with no competition for the title. There is no room for mingling other relationships as top priority whether in the office, within social networks, or in clubs. Your spouse should be your best friend and top priority in relationship.

<sup>50</sup> **Proverbs 15:13-15** connects cheerfulness with a glad heart, full life, and joyful face. Christians should have a cheerful home while also learning to lament in our fallen world. Part of training our children in godliness necessitates discernment for the time and season of life (**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**).

<sup>51</sup> P.B. Hill and his family served as missionaries in South Korea before moving to San Antonio.

Many a child has been permanently turned against religion because of the criticism of ministers and Sunday school teachers by parents. Many more have grown up to have little or no interest in religion because parents criticized the church and belittled Christians who stood uncompromisingly against popular forms of sin. This is a very serious matter. Jesus said, “but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” (**Matthew 18:6**)

*The home should be quiet.* Children’s nerves require rest and relief from the tension of modern life. They cannot stand the excitement and confusion that comes from certain types of movies, radio-murders, boogie-woogie music, jive and swing.<sup>52</sup> We are increasingly seeing the effects of this in nervous, high-strung children.<sup>53</sup> A noted psychologist recently said that much of the delinquency of juveniles, sex offenses, and irresponsibility could be traced to the jitterbug craze, and the songs and music that go along with it. Our children should be happy but not abandoned.

**True love is essential to the home that endures. The love that was kindled in courtship should light the home through all the days ahead.**

If you have misunderstandings adjust them sensibly and in the spirit of Christ. Rudeness, harsh words, impatience, sullen attitudes never helped any situation.<sup>54</sup> These only make bad matters even worse. Sometimes, under stress and strain, hasty words are spoken, but you should never let the day close without reconciliation. If there was ever a place where the Scriptural injunction, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,” should apply, it is home.

God said, “Husbands love your wives and be not bitter against them.” (**Col. 3:19**) To refuse to accept an explanation or to refuse to hear expressions of regret and to reject overtures of affection is not a mark of strength, but an evidence of weakness. Your love must be strong enough to ignore little faults; strong enough to stand adversity without complaint; compassionate in time of sickness and unfailing when trial comes.<sup>55</sup>

**Thus, homes endure, and nations live. Not by chance or fate, but by the grace of God and by the determination of Christian parents, in loyalty to Christ, to order their lives and their homes according to the teaching of His Holy Word.**

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52 The humor of Hill’s dance references should not distract us from the heart of Hill’s admonishment: Work to create your home to be a place of respite from the world. Make sure there is room to disconnect and unplug from technology, media, entertainment, and the business of life in order to reconnect with one another and with the Lord.

53 Today’s issues for children are an astronomical rise in mental health issues including depression, anxiety, disorders of various kinds, and deaths of despair (suicide).

54 Healthy communication will help cultivate a healthy home. For resources in improving communication please see the resources in the appendixes.

55 The original manuscript includes another excerpt from a Burns poem, what appears to be a Scottish version of a portion of the Song of Solomon. This has been moved to appendix B.

**Questions for Reflection:**

1. The home that endures will be a Christ-centered home. Ask the Lord to show you what your home is centered on and, by the power of His Spirit, to re-center Christ in your heart, relationships, and life together.
2. Has everyone in your home given his or her life to Christ, responding to the gospel with repentance unto life? If not, prioritize this first step of family renewal.
3. Is your home cheerful? Why or why not? How can you cultivate cheerfulness in your home?
4. Is your home a place for your family to disconnect from the business and distractions of our culture in order to reconnect with the Lord and one another? How can you make your home more of a sanctuary towards these ends?
5. How can the flourishing of your home bless your neighbors and the nation? What is your role in helping fragmented families flourish in your city? Every family has a need and every person has a role! Let's move forward together.

If you want to change  
the world, go  
*home*  
and love your  
*family*

**Marriage**

*When Sinners Say "I Do,"* Dave Harvey  
*The Meaning of Marriage,* Tim Keller  
*Each For the Other,* Bryan Chapell  
*God, Marriage, and Family,* Andreas Kostenberger  
*What Did You Expect?,* Paul Tripp  
*Sacred Marriage,* Gary Thomas  
*The Five Love Languages,* Dr. Gary Chapman

**General Parenting:**

*Give Them Grace,* Elyse Fitzpatrick  
*Gospel-Powered Parenting,* William Farley  
*Peacemaking for Families,* Ken Sande  
*How a Man Prays for His Family,* John Yates  
*Your Home: A Place of Grace,* Susan Hunt  
*It's Just a Phase: So Don't Miss It!,* Reggie Joiner and Kristen Ivy  
*Are My Kids On Track?,* Sissy Goff, David Thomas, Melissa Trevathan  
*Families Where Grace is In Place,* Jeff VanVonderen  
*Boundaries with Kids,* Townsend and Cloud  
*The Tech-Wise Family,* Andy Crouch  
*Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles that Can Radically Change Your Family,* Paul David Tripp

**Bibles for Children**

*The Jesus Storybook Bible,* Sally Lloyd-Jones  
*Gospel Story Bible,* Marty Machowski  
*The Child's Story Bible,* Catherine F. Vos  
*The Children's Bible in 365 Days,* Mary Batchelor  
*Psalm Twenty-Three,* Illustrated by Tim Ladwig  
*The Lord's Prayer,* Illustrated by Tim Ladwig

**Discipling Your Children**

*Big Truths For Young Hearts,* Bruce Ware  
*Parenting in the Pew,* Castleman  
*Instructing A Child's Heart,* Tedd Tripp  
*Long Story Short,* Marty Machowski  
*How Our Children Come to Faith,* Stephen Smallman  
*Ignite the Fire: Kindling a Passion for Christ in Your Kids,* Barry & Carol St. Clair

It was love like this that inspired the Scottish poet, Burns, to write:

“John Anderson, my jo, John,  
When we were first acquent,  
Your locks were like the raven,  
Your bonnie brow was brent ;  
But now your brow is beld, John,  
Your locks are like the snaw;  
But blessings on your frosty pow,  
John Anderson my jo.  
John Anderson my jo, John,  
We clamb the hill thegither ;  
And monie a cantie day John,  
We’ve had wi’; ane anither;  
Now we maun totter down, John,  
And hand in hand we’ll go,  
And sleep thegither at the foot,  
John Anderson my jo.”





DECADE *of* FAMILY



*First Presbyterian*  
CHURCH OF SAN ANTONIO