

GOD'S IDEAL WOMAN

by

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CHAPTER FOUR

HOME

WHAT MAKES IT AND WHAT BREAKS IT

THE WORD “HOME” always stirs our memories. For those who had a happy Christian home the word is exceedingly precious. Home was the first institution established by the hand of God. It came before the church, school, government, or anything else.

God places a great premium on the home, and we need to remember that society cannot rise higher than the home. In fact, the home is the very foundation of civilization.

This chapter is written for men and women, boys and girls. I trust that you will encourage every member of your family to read it carefully and prayerfully.

WHAT MAKES A HOME

There are many things that help to make a home, but I can only mention five in this short chapter.

TRUE LOVE

If we love Christ with all our heart, we will have a tender love for every member of our family. Christ should be the very center of our home. He should be the hub of the wheel of our home, and every spoke must head up in Him if there is to be success and harmony.

Love for Christ and for each other seems to make the hard places softer, the rough places smoother, the problems less difficult, the questions easier, and the burdens lighter.

A little girl almost staggered under the weight of a fat baby. Someone said, “Isn’t that baby too heavy for you?” She quickly replied, “Oh no, he’s not too heavy. You see, he’s my brother.”

Love makes the difference, doesn’t it? Love mortar is the best kind to hold a home together.

THE STICK-TOGETHER FAMILIES

The stick-together families are happier by far
Than the brothers and sisters who take separate highways are.
The gladdest people living are the wholesome folks who make
A circle at the fireside that no power hut death can break.
And the finest of conventions ever held beneath the sun
Are the little family gatherings when the busy day is done.

There are rich folk, there are poor folk, who imagine they are wise,
And they're very quick to shatter all the little family ties.
Each goes searching after pleasure in his own selected way,
Each with strangers likes to wander, and with strangers likes to play.
But it's bitterness they harvest, and it's empty joy they find,
For the children that are wisest are the stick-together kind.
There are some who seem to fancy that for gladness they must roam,
That for smiles that are the brightest they must wander far from home.
That the strange friend is the true friend, and they travel far astray
And they waste their lives in striving for a joy that's far away,
But the gladdest sort of people, when the busy day is done,
Are the brothers and sisters who together share their fun.

It's the stick-together family that wins the joys of earth,
That hears the sweetest music and that finds the finest mirth;
It's the old home roof that shelters all the charm that life can give;
There you find the gladdest playground, there the happiest spot to live.
And O weary, wandering brother, if contentment you would win,
Come you back unto the fireside and be comrade with your kin.

— Edgar A. Guest

FAMILY ALTAR

A young married woman once said to me, "My husband and I started a family altar the first night after we were married. Reading the Bible and praying together has been such a blessing to us. We would not cease having our altar for anything in the world."

Many people have told me similar stories. My wife and I can add our testimony to the blessings received at the family altar. We started ours the night we were married. Now, usually after the evening meal, we retire to the living room and read two verses each until we finish a chapter in the Bible, and then kneel for prayer. We all pray each time. In this way we are drawn closer to each other and to the Lord. We also have private devotions in the morning.

Why don't you parents establish, or re-establish, an altar in your home?

You cheat yourselves and your children out of a great blessing if you neglect this valuable institution. I have known young people and children to desire a family altar so much that their parents established one because of their persistence. Do you have the altar in your home?

IF EVERY HOME WERE AN ALTAR

If every home were an altar,
Where the holiest vows were paid,
And life's best gifts in sacrament
Of purest love were laid;

If every home were an altar,
Where harsh and angry thought
Were cast aside for kindly one
And true forgiveness sought;

If every home were an altar,
Where hearts weighed down with care
Could find sustaining strength and grace
In sweet uplift and prayer;

Then solved would be earth's problems,
Banished sin's curse and blight,
For God's own love would radiate
From every altar light.

CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN LIVING

This includes unselfishness, consideration, forgiveness, patience, and many other things. Inconsistency is one of the worst sins in the catalog. Do the members of your family have confidence in your Christianity and respect for your testimony? Can they see Christ in your every word and deed? They may not read the Bible, but they read your life every day. Are you demonstrating that Christ saves, keeps, and satisfies?

“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

TACTFUL AUTHORITY

Many parents are not tactful in their discipline. They do not seem to realize the possibility of being firm and kind at the same time. You may get suggestions from books of psychology, but God alone can give you the necessary wisdom in rearing your children.

There were two things in our home that I will never forget: the Bible that my father used at night, and the razor-strop which he used—well, quite frequently.

As a boy I thought my father was terribly unkind to the peach trees that grew in our back yard. He would snatch off the larger sprouts and damage was not only done to the trees, but in other quarters as well.

The older I get, the more I appreciate that “razor-strop soup” and that “peach sprout tonic.” I am indeed grateful that my father could say an emphatic “No!” His example and good advice did more for me than words can express.

“And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

LOVING OBEDIENCE

The best place to learn to obey is at home. It will come natural for us to obey the rules at school and the laws of the land if we learn obedience at home.

Young man, young lady, there will come a time in your life when you will deeply regret every disobedient act, every unkind word, every bit of trouble, and every anxious moment you caused your parents.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:1-3).

The secret is found in obeying and loving Christ. It may be that your parents and friends have prayed earnestly for you, and you are still unsaved. If you have not been genuinely converted, I beg you to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour this very day. This decision is too important to postpone.

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12).

“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (I John 5:12).

WHAT BREAKS A HOME?

We all know that one little word spelled with three little letters is the cause of all the broken homes, blighted hopes, wrecked ambitions, and all the other trouble in the world. That word is SIN.

The following verses give some valuable information about marriage and the home:

“The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”

“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

“They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matthew 19:3-9).

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5: 22-25).

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Ephesians 5: 31-33).

It is a sad fact that so many marriages are broken by divorces. Someone asked a movie actress, “Are you married?” She smilingly replied, “Yes, occasionally.” A divorce is a sad and dangerous thing every way you figure it.

I will discuss briefly five of the many things used by the devil to break homes and hearts.

SELFISHNESS

It is easy for selfish people to become stubborn, and what a combination! There is plenty of giving and taking, and sometimes it seems that the “for worse” exceeds the “for better.” Too many folks want to have their own way whether it be right or wrong.

Some couples would like to have their home blessed with children; but sometimes this is denied. Others selfishly refuse to accept the responsibility of a family, when one or more children might do more to weld the home together and bring real joy than anything else.

If people are unselfish, yielded Christians, the Holy Spirit will enable them to solve aright every problem of their home. Only selfish people prevent the Lord Jesus Christ from being

The Head of the house,
The Unseen Guest at every meal,
And the Silent Listener to every conversation.

INTEMPERANCE

This word, according to Mr. Webster, means “*want of moderation or self-restraint; excess, especially in the use of alcoholic liquors.*”

Good habits and bad habits are easily formed, but bad ones are especially hard to break. There are some habits which would not necessarily break a home, but should be left off if they are expensive, injurious to health, or a bad influence upon our family or others.

We should not be intemperate in our eating. I once heard of a man who was told by his doctor to quit eating so many sweets. He was especially warned about pies, just the thing he loved better than anything else. As many others, he would not watch his diet; and after digging his grave with his teeth, this inscription was written on his tomb:

He couldn't say “No” to whipped cream pie,
And for that reason here he doth lie.

The use of tobacco is one of the most expensive and pointless habits of all. Why will folks throw away money for something that injures their health? If for no other reason, economy and health should prevent any person from using tobacco in any form. When older people use it they certainly are not setting a good example for children and young people.

Tobacco is a filthy weed,
It was the devil who sowed the seed,
It picks your pockets, spoils your clothes,
And makes a chimney out of your nose.

It is not my purpose to enumerate the habits of which people are guilty, but I must say something about strong drink. There are some things that we can afford to partake of in a temperate way, but other things should never be touched at all. Everyone should know that alcohol comes in this latter class. War has killed millions, but whisky has killed tens of millions and broken many, many homes.

Selfish folks argue that they must have it for medical purposes, and they stubbornly excuse their “Christmas toddy” and “the social drink.” People get sick very quickly and quite frequently when the “peppy tonic” is waiting close by. Some say, “Oh, I can take it, or leave it!” They usually take it, too, and seldom ever leave it.

We read in Proverbs 20:1:

“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”

We need a heart purpose as Daniel had.

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank” (Daniel 1:8)

If you have never started these bad habits, don’t ever start! If you are in the grip of any of them, remember, there is liberty in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17).

DISLOYALTY

It is worse than a crime for people to break the sacred vows of marriage. Your vows were made not only in the presence of witnesses, but also in the presence of Almighty God. It is better never to make a promise than to make one and break it. We would have sympathy but not respect for any man or woman who breaks his solemn oath, and I wonder if they can have any self-respect.

A man in a northern city came to my hotel room and requested prayer. Here is his story: “I met a girl at church. She sang in the choir. After some months of courtship, we were married. I almost worshipped that girl and lived true to her every minute. She left me recently and went away with another man. I didn’t dream that there was anything wrong until the tragedy had happened.”

I once visited a very humble home with a Christian woman who took some food to some hungry children. One little fellow about six was ill. His sister, not more than ten, was acting as mother and nursemaid. A child of three years played on the floor. The father was working and the mother had gotten in trouble with another married man, and both had left the country. Two homes were broken, and several hearts crushed. Just another sad picture painted by the slimy brush of disloyalty.

In a southern city a grief-stricken mother said to me: “Please pray for my husband. I know that he is not true to me, and our home is on the very verge of being broken. I never nag and would never think of being disloyal in any way. How I wish that he would be converted and live right for the sake of the children and the family name.”

MISUNDERSTANDING

If the machinery of the home runs smoothly, the oil of sympathetic understanding must be applied constantly. This oil will take you speedily over the ups and downs along the path of life.

Hearts are very easily broken because they are very tender. It is hard to mend one when it is broken.

Neither husband nor wife should be too selfish and proud to say, “Please forgive me; I am sorry.”

Some folks should think, not twice, but many times before they speak. A couple should try to understand each other's background, temperament, and problems. She should be willing to help him with his letters, and he should be only too glad to don an apron and assist in doing the dishes. Marriage that is not built on a oneness or together-proposition is certain to go on the rocks.

They were so truly one
That no one knew which ruled, and which obeyed.
He ruled because she would obey,
And she, by loving, ruled the most.

A friend of mine in England tells the story of a couple who had quarreled, and they slowly walked down the road several feet apart. "What words is that bird in the tree singing?" asked the man. "I can't imagine," responded his wife. "It is singing, 'I love you, I love you, I love you.'"

Both were quiet a few steps, and she said, "There is another bird. Can you guess what it is singing?"

"I don't know," he replied. "It is singing, 'Show it, show it, show it!'" He did show it, and instead of living "scrappily," they lived "happily ever after."

JEALOUSY

The poets call jealousy "a green-eyed monster." It is worse than that. Jealousy crushes confidence and trust under its wicked heel. It works overtime in breaking homes and hearts. Jealousy destroys affections, undermines harmony, breaks the closest bonds, and in the words of an old saying "is as cruel as the grave."

There is only one cure for jealousy, that is, both hearts loving Christ supremely and trusting each other completely. If both parties are genuinely converted and live a yielded Christian life, there will be no room for jealousy in their hearts. If you keep Christ the head of your life and home, the devil will never be able to break it up.

A HOUSE OR HOME?

It takes more than a house to make a home. You can live in a palace and have only a house. You can live in a rented flat, humble cottage, or small cabin and have a real home. It is easy to transform a home into a mere boarding house, just a place to eat and sleep. Do you live in a house or a home?

A Christian home is the nearest thing on earth to heaven. It has been called an annex to the Glory Land. You parents have a right, by faith, to claim every member of your family for Christ and heaven. "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house**" (Acts 16:31). Parents should go in for household salvation.

If a wife will live consistently she can win her husband and children to Christ. It may take time, but do not get discouraged. Many consecrated men have won their wives to the Saviour. Parents can have the assurance that the family circle will be unbroken in the sky. Do not stop praying and working until every child is in the fold.

After the funeral of an elderly woman who had been left a widow early in life, a neighbor asked the eldest of six sons, "How did she do it?"

He took her to his mother's room and pointed to an old chair and rug. Two dents could be seen in the rug where the mother had knelt to pray each day for many years. "Prayer is the secret," he said. "It is the thing that brought us through every hard place. We boys were wayward at times, but she never stopped praying. Through her earnest prayers and godly influence she won all of us boys to her Saviour."

Do you live a life of prayer? Do you have in your home that priceless institution called the family altar? Can the other members of your family and the neighbors see Christ in your daily walk? Won't you say with the prophet, "**As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord**"? (Joshua 24:15).

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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