

22.06.2019 WHAT HAVE THEY SEEN IN YOUR HOUSE?

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. 1 Peter 2:9

“But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” Joshua 24:15

God calls the Christian family to be a witness to the community they live in.

The Importance of the Witness of a Christian Home

A well-ordered Christian household is a powerful argument in favour of the reality of the Christian religion—an argument that the infidel cannot gainsay. All can see that there is an influence at work in the family that affects the children, and that the God of Abraham is with them. If the homes of professed Christians had a right religious mould, they would exert a mighty influence for good. They would indeed be the "light of the world." *Adventist Home.*

What Has the World seen in Our Homes?

The story of King Hezekiah has a lesson for us today. He had been very ill and was healed by God. This news of the miracle spread to Babylon and the King of Babylon sent messengers to Jerusalem.

At that time Merodach-Baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered. And Hezekiah was pleased with them, and showed them the house of his treasures—the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all his armoury—all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them. Isaiah 39:1, 2

God was displeased by this. Why? Could it be that Hezekiah showed them all the material possessions he had received from God, but did not testify to the greatness and loving-kindness of the God he worshipped. We talk today of ‘show and tell’...Hezekiah ‘showed’, but he did not ‘tell’.

When Hezekiah recovered from his illness, he praised God... *“The living, the living man, he shall praise You, as I do this day; the father shall make known Your truth to the children. The Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord.” Isaiah 38:19, 20*

But there is no record of his praising God when he met the Babylonians.

In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death, and he prayed to the Lord; and He spoke to him and gave him a sign. But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favour shown him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart; he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah... regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, God withdrew from him, in order to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart. 2 Chronicles 32:24-26, 31

Do we do the same thing today? Are we happy to have people visit us in our homes and see all the blessings of material possessions God has showered upon us, but are hesitant to talk about God and give Him the praise for what He has done for us, not only materially but spiritually as well. We are to look for opportunities to “*declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light*” 2 Peter 1:9.

For Reflection:

Does the family continue to say grace before meals and have family worship when people come to visit?

Do we look for opportunities to tell others that all we are blessed with – education, a good job, a comfortable lifestyle – are due to God’s goodness?

Family First – Teaching the Family the Gospel

Our first and most important witness is to the members of our family. Our children must see us model the grace, patience and justice of God in all our dealings with them. They must hear us tell them of the wonderful works of God, of His perfect will for our lives (Deuteronomy 6:4-8, Psalm 78:3-10). They must see that God is first in our lives and that we love our neighbours and friends and church family as God has loved us.

This is not easy. It requires parents to be intentional in following God's will for raising children. It requires TIME; all parents need to ask themselves if two working parents truly can provide the time needed to listen to children, to teach them and to guide them. We must in all things seek to do God's will. We must believe that God is well able to provide all our needs even with a single salary. However, if circumstances do require us to work to provide the needs of the family, we must ask for God's grace to ensure that we are not too tired to spend time with our children and teach them about God.

Fathers and mothers need to understand their responsibility. The world is full of snares for the feet of the young. Multitudes are attracted by a life of selfish and sensual pleasure. They cannot discern the hidden dangers or the fearful ending of the path that seems to them the way of happiness. Through the indulgence of appetite and passion, their energies are wasted, and millions are ruined for this world and for the world to come. Parents should remember that their children must encounter these temptations... Especially does responsibility rest upon the mother. She, by whose lifeblood the child is nourished and its physical frame built up, imparts to it also mental and spiritual influences that tend to the shaping of mind and character. It was Jochebed, the Hebrew mother, who, strong in faith, was "not afraid of the king's commandment" (Hebrews 11:23), of whom was born Moses, the deliverer of Israel. It was Hannah, the woman of prayer and self-sacrifice and heavenly inspiration, who gave birth to Samuel, the heaven-instructed child, the incorruptible judge, the founder of Israel's sacred schools. It was Elizabeth the kinswoman and kindred spirit of Mary of Nazareth, who was the mother of the Saviour's herald...If the mother unswervingly adheres to right principles, if she is temperate and self-denying, if she is kind, gentle, and unselfish, she may give her child these same precious traits of character. *Ministry of Healing: p.372-373*

Where there is an unbelieving spouse, the believing spouse must ask God daily for a double portion of His Spirit to enable him or her to be a living witness of the unfailing, unconditional love of God.

In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives. 1 Peter 3:1, 2 (NLT)

"Family is the school of Christian life...Father and Mother are apostles, bishops and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel. They can do no better work and do nothing more valuable for God, for Christendom, for all the world, for themselves, and for their children than to bring up their children well...for bringing up their children properly is the shortest road to heaven. In fact, heaven itself could not be made nearer or achieved more easily than by doing this work. It is also their appointed work". *Martin Luther*

Hospitality

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Hebrews 13:2

Family life is for sharing. In the Old Testament we find that hospitality was not just part of the Jewish culture; it was commanded by God. In the New Testament it is also commanded.

God administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. Deuteronomy 10:18, 19

When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality. Romans 12:13 NLT

“Is this not the fast that I have chosen...Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Isaiah 57:6-7

Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. 1 Peter 4:9

Then He also said to him who invited Him, “When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbours, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. Luke 14:12, 13

God is the ultimate Host; He invites all to come to His house just as they are. He invites us to share in His pleasure by becoming good hosts ourselves.

And in the process, many we invite to our homes will be drawn to the God we love.

There are many others to whom we might make our homes a blessing. Our social entertainments should not be governed by the dictates of worldly custom, but by the Spirit of Christ and the teaching of His word. The Israelites, in all their festivities, included the poor, the stranger, and the Levite, who was both the assistant of the priest in the sanctuary, and a religious teacher and missionary. These were regarded as the guests of the people, to share their hospitality on all occasions of social and religious rejoicing, and to be tenderly cared for in sickness or in need. It is such as these whom we should make welcome to our homes. How much such a welcome might do to cheer and encourage the missionary nurse or the teacher, the care-burdened, hard-working mother, or the feeble and aged, so often without a home, and struggling with poverty and many discouragements.

These are guests whom it will lay on you no great burden to receive. You will not need to provide for them elaborate or expensive entertainment. You will need to make no effort at display. The warmth of a genial welcome, a place at your fireside, a seat at your home table, the privilege of sharing the blessing of the hour of prayer, would to many of these be like a glimpse of heaven.

Our homes should be a place of refuge for the tempted youth. Many there are who stand at the parting of the ways. Every influence, every impression, is determining the choice that shapes their destiny both here and hereafter. Evil invites them. Its resorts are made bright and attractive. They have a welcome for every comer. All about us are youth who have no home, and many whose homes have no helpful, uplifting power, and the youth drift into evil. They are going down to ruin within the very shadow of our own doors.

These youth need a hand stretched out to them in sympathy. Kind words simply spoken, little attentions simply bestowed, will sweep away the clouds of temptation which gather over the soul. The true expression of heaven-born sympathy has power to open the door of hearts that need the fragrance of Christ-like words, and the simple, delicate touch of the spirit of Christ's love. If we would show an interest in the youth, invite them to our homes, and surround them with cheering, helpful influences, there are many who would gladly turn their steps into the upward path. Ministry of Healing: p. 353-355

Conclusion:

Our time here is short. We can pass through this world but once; as we pass along, let us make the most of life. The work to which we are called does not require wealth or social position or great ability. It requires a kindly, self-sacrificing spirit and a steadfast purpose. A lamp, however small, if kept steadily burning, may be the means of lighting many other lamps. Our sphere of influence may seem narrow, our ability small, our opportunities few, our acquirements limited; yet wonderful possibilities are ours through a faithful use of the opportunities of our own homes. If we will open our hearts and homes to the divine principles of life we shall become channels for currents of life-giving power. From our homes will flow streams of healing, bringing life and beauty and fruitfulness where now are barrenness and dearth. *Ibid.*