

God Builds Better Homes

This lesson will focus on God's plan for the family. We will examine God's plan for happy homes.

As the home goes, so goes the church.

A happy growing church depends upon happy glowing homes.

The family is the basic unit of the church.

The hope for the future of the church lies in the Christian home.

The church is no stronger than the families that make up her membership.

The leaders of the church are no better than the leaders of our families.

As the home goes, so also goes our nation.

As we drive down the streets through the quiet neighborhoods of our communities, we would suppose that all is well with the family structure of our society.

Yet many homes as we find them today are not blessings to those who make up their family, or to their community, nation, or the church. Observe the evidence. Only about one in four (25%) of the marriages in America are happy and fulfilled. The other 75% are in trouble, or frustrated, or simply blind to what is going on inside their homes.

Family relationships need be strengthened.

God provides the guide for family life. God builds better homes. Preachers and marriage counselors cannot. Neither do sociology professors. Nor do the politicians or judges who create and enforce our laws. Only God's Word reveals the principles and values for happy homes. Three of those values are love, togetherness, and respect. We will examine those three values in this lesson.

1. A happy home radiates LOVE from heart to heart.

A happy home is a place of love - Proverb 15:17.

Here is my paraphrase of that verse. It is far better for boys and girls and mothers and fathers to sit down to a plain meal of bread and water where there is love, than to live in a fine house and feast sumptuously on a holiday dinner and all the trimmings where there is hatred, distrust, contempt, bickering, quarreling, name calling, inconsideration, criticism, sarcastic and negative teasing, and destructive habits.

It takes a lot of loving to make a house a home.

Home not only needs to be a place of unity, purity, and safety. It also needs to be a place of love.

A wise man said that love is the accurate estimate and supply of another's need. Romans 13:10 teaches us that love is more than the absence of harm. Love fulfills all obligations and meets every need - physical, emotional, and spiritual.

Most of us are consumers of love, but not adequate suppliers of love to others. We must learn to give love as well as receive it. We must grow up and out grow our childish and selfish ideas about love.

Ask yourself these questions.

- How well do I show love to my children?
- How well do I show love to my parents?
- How completely do I love my wife?
- How completely do I love my husband?

Build your home with love.

Someone advertizing ready-built houses said, "We build homes, not houses." That is impossible! The only home you can build is your own. You may build a house for a family, but they have to build their own home. You may break up someone's home, but you cannot build it for them. A home is built on personal love.

Home to a lot of people is just a place to stop when there is no other place to go. They change clothes, eat a bite, sleep a wink, and are on the go again. That is not a happy home.

A little boy was checking out of school in the middle of a semester because his father was transferring to another city. The father worked as a civilian employee for the government as an inspector for military installations. He was transferred every 13-14 weeks. They owned no house or furniture and lived in motels and hotels. When the little boy was checking in his books at the school, some of his classmates said, "It's too bad you don't have a home like we do." The little boy replied, "We have a home. We just don't have a house to put it in." We always told our children that our home is where our family is.

2. A happy home does things TOGETHER.

The family unit is deteriorating in America today. Family members are scattering in different directions with their separate activities. Parents have delegated many responsibilities to the church, school, community organizations, and the government.

Family members need to enjoy meaningful activities together. I began to learn that lesson when I was preaching in Xenia, Ohio. I thought my work was so important that I could not find time for my family. All three of our boys were preschoolers. When Mark was 5 years old I remember him asking if I had to go out again tonight. He was begging me to take him to a group called Indian Guides. That is when I began to realize how important it was to work with their Cub Scouts Den, Boy Scouts Troop, Little League Baseball Teams, and attend their school activities as well as taking them with me on some of my church visits. We tried to plan our family vacations around things they could enjoy.

Families need to do four things.

1. Work together and make it interesting. Common effort and mutual achievement is the adhesive that helps husbands and wives and parents and children stick together and make them happier. Ralph Holloway, a member of the Marion church of Christ when we were there, built a stone fireplace. His four children carried the sandstone. Their mother, Pat, mixed the mortar, and Ralph laid the stone. The result was a beautiful fireplace in their family room that they all enjoyed together.
2. Play together for fun. Shared physical exercise and relaxation really does draw people closer together like family picnics, hiking, playing ball, fishing, hunting, and playing games on the living room floor. Support each other by everyone attending an activity in which a family member is participating.
3. Pray together and make it personal. The family that prays together stays together. You cannot hate or despise someone you pray with. Dorene always made sure that our boys had a Bible story and prayer time when they went to bed even when I was not home at their bed time. Teach God's Word daily to our children - Deuteronomy 6:6-7. This requires spending time together.
4. Worship together joyfully. Family worship helps build strong homes. Sit together in worship, especially when the children are small. That is why I sit with Dorene instead of on the front seat. I should have done that when our 3 boys were preschoolers.

Do things together and you will have a happier family.

3. Showing RESPECT for each other is a fundamental foundation for building better homes.

God offers the perfect plan for family respect.

Ephesians 5:25,28,29,33 offer the perfect plan for respect within marriage.

Ephesians 6:1-4 offer the perfect plan for respect between parents and children.

Jesus taught the simple rule for respect in Matthew 7:12. Practicing the golden rule determines how you treat family members with respect.

How do you want to be treated? Make a list.

How do your family members want to be treated? Ask them to make a list.

Do to others what they would have you do to them is the spirit of the golden rule.

You show respect by treating others the way that **they** want to be treated.

This will stop almost all criticism, nagging, sarcasm, angry words, selfishness, rebellion, and unfaithfulness.

The golden rule suggests three C's for showing respect for family members.

1. Consideration
2. Cooperation
3. Communication.

Fifty years ago in our wedding ceremony, the preacher, Clifford Tucker, preached these 3 points to Dorene and me.

1. The golden rule practices **Consideration** of others not control of others. Philippians 2:2-4 directs us to consider the interests of others above our own. Too often we try to control each other rather than show consideration. Are we as considerate of family members as with our friends and co-workers? Remember all those extra nice thoughtful gestures while we were dating and on our honeymoon. Opening doors, helping with the chair, holding her coat, picking up after yourself, and using breath mints. We often begin to take each other for granted. How long has it been since you were as considerate of your wife, husband, parents, or children as you are to your friends or co-workers? Let's restore common courtesy in our family relationships.
2. The golden rule implies **Cooperation** not just compliance. Ephesians 5:25,28,29,33 and 6:1-4 point to a high level of cooperation in the home. Compliance because you have to do something is not the same as cooperation because you want to do something. Marriage is not like a business deal. I have heard preachers say that marriage is a 50-50 proposition. I disagree. Family relationships are not a 50/50 deal. Respectful and happy homes require each family member giving 100% whether the other one does or not. Too many quarreling mates and other relatives say if you go halfway, I will. Or if you do your part, I will do mine. That is the wrong attitude. This won't build better homes. Destructive words in the home are me, myself, and I. The most important words are we, our, and us.

In the spirit of cooperation we must restore the natural order of the home as God intended:

Husbands and fathers must again lead as the loving head of the home, not as a dictatorial ruler nor as a timid, indecisive, passive onlooker.

Wives and mothers must proudly lead as homemakers, not as a servant nor as a rebel.

Children must respectfully learn to become mature adults.

Then we will enjoy the blessing of happy homes in America again!

3. The golden rule suggests **Communication** not contempt. Proverbs 21:9,19 reveal that contentious and angry words can destroy family relationships. Any relationship without communication will not survive. A family without communication is miserable. Lack of communication at home is the # 1 reason men pay for prostitutes and 900 phone sex calls. Communication facilitates understanding. Remember that you must first seek to understand others before you can expect them to understand you. Yelling and shouting never won an argument, proved anything, or solved a problem. Silent pouting doesn't do it either.

Take action now to create more happiness in your home. Decide now what you will do to show more respect to those you love. Follow God's way for building better homes and happier families.

- Radiate love from heart to heart.
- Do things together.
- Practice the golden rule especially with consideration, cooperation, and communication.

A home is happiest when it is a Christian home. Jesus said in John 10:10 that "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." The abundant life needs to begin at home with our own family. If you are not a Christian or are not living the Christian life, the best thing that you can do for yourself and your family is to invite Jesus to come into your life and into your home. You first need to be a faithful member of God's family, the church. Galatians 3:26-27 tells how to do that.