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"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

Home Sweet Home

Lesson Subject: Believers should establish and maintain their homes on divine principles.

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"Every house where love abides and friendship is a guest,/ Is surely home and home sweet home, for there the heart can rest" (author unknown).

One of the most blessed of all human relationships is the union of a man and a woman as "*one flesh*" in the marriage covenant. God designed us for marriage — physically, spiritually, and emotionally. He made us male and female with the marriage relationship in mind.

God sanctifies the marriage relationship. Jesus spoke of marriage as what "*God hath joined together*" (Matthew 19:6). That means marriage is ordained of God, is blessed of God, and is a union under God. How sacred that makes the relationship! That is why we say, "God is the creator and the preserver of the home."

Our goal in this series of studies is to help you make your home a truly Christian one. There is a difference between a Christian home and a home where Christians live. In a truly Christian home, Christ is the head and His will is the law. That is the kind of home that endures to the mutual happiness of the family members, to the blessing of the community, and to the glory of God.

We could pray, "God, give us Christian homes." But a Christian home is not simply the gift of God; it is also the result of faith, prayer, and effort on the part of those who live there. Let us rather ask God to help us as we work to have Christian homes.

I. HEAD OF THE HOME — GOD

The account of God's instituting the first home is recorded in Genesis 2:15-25. There are ten references to God in those eleven verses. And God wrote it! That means He is at the very center of the institution of the home in human society. His own actions instituted the home.

A. God created male and female with marriage in mind. Genesis 5:1, 2 summarizes the actions of God on the "*day*" He created the male and female arrangement. Then He gave this explanation: "*For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh*" (Matthew 19:5). The book of Genesis mentions the creation of the woman after the creation of man. Then we read this significant statement: "*And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man*" (Genesis 2:22). How did they become male and female? God made them that way. How did they come together? God brought them together.

B. God established the home first. It was before the state, school, or church. It is the first institution in human society. It is first because it is basic.

There can be no strong school without strong homes. The state is threatened if the homes of its citizens break up. Not even the church can be strong if its homes are weak. It is in the home that society shows its real life. Weak homes produce a weak society. That is the reason the devil has such an attack going against marriage and the home today. For the good of your country, your schools, and your churches, build a strong Christian home.

C. God established an order of authority in the home. It is God, husband, wife, children, in descending order. The Bible clearly sets forth that order.

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife" (Ephesians 5:22, 23). *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right"* (Ephesians 6:1). Man did not set up those rules; God did. The head of the children are the parents, the head of the woman is the man, the head of man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God (I Corinthians 11:3). To change that order is to defy the ordinance of God.

D. God has put the guidelines for home life in the Bible. To have a happy home, one must follow those guidelines. The purpose of this series of lessons is to review some of those guidelines to help you direct your home in the will of God. That is the way a happy home is governed. Let this slogan

be true for you: "Christ is the head of this home."

II. HUSBAND OF THE HOME — MAN

A. The man was the first person to be created. *"The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"* (Genesis 2:7). Paul based his position on the authority to teach on that fact, writing, *"I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man . . . For Adam was first formed, then Eve"* (I Timothy 2:12, 13). The priority of the man gave him a place of leadership. God decreed it to be so.

B. The man was fulfilled in his companion. God's creation was perfect in every way, except one. God said, *"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him"* (Genesis 2:18). And He did!

The Bible emphasizes the contribution a good wife makes to her husband. *"A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband"* (Proverbs 12:4). *"A prudent wife is from the LORD"* (Proverbs 19:14). *"She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life"* (Proverbs 31:12). No wonder God gave the woman to the man as a complement to him. He needs her and she contributes much to him.

C. The man is responsible for the family. God's call to a family is always addressed through the man. God called Noah (not Mrs. Noah) to bring all the family into the ark (Genesis 7:1). God called Abram (not Sarai) to leave Ur of the Chaldees to dwell in Canaan (Genesis 12:1). God held Abraham (not Sarah) responsible to *"command his children and his household after him"* (Genesis 18:19). God called Joseph (not Mary) to take the baby Jesus into Egypt to escape the wrath of King Herod, and afterwards to bring them back to Palestine (Matthew 2:13-21). What a solemn responsibility is on the man of the house! He is responsible for his whole household before God.

III. HELPER IN THE HOME - WOMAN

Since man is the head of the home, woman is the heart of the home. She is its anchor. She sets its emotional tone. Since she fulfills the man, she is essential to a happy home.

A. The woman was provided to meet a need in man. He was so

incomplete without her that God said, *"It is not good that man should be alone"* (Genesis 2:18). She completes him.

Early colonists in America numbered many more men than women. A woman was treasured highly in that condition. On a tombstone from those early days there is the inscription, "Her little foot touched the soil of Virginia and the wilderness became a home." That is why Proverbs 18:22 says, *"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtaineth favour of the LORD."* "Favour" means "grace." The man who finds a good wife receives the special blessing of God.

B. The woman is equal to the man. Adam was correct in saying of Eve, *"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh"* (Genesis 2:23). Both the male and female were created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). There is no distinction between them before God. It matters not whether one is a man or a woman when he comes to Jesus Christ. God has set physical, social, emotional, and cultural differences between them, but both are equal before Him.

C. The woman is to fulfill her husband. That is where she finds her real fulfillment in life. The heart of a woman longs to complement the man she has chosen as her husband. She rejoices in being his *"help meet,"* the one who matches him and completes him (Genesis 2:18). *"The woman is the glory of the man"* (I Corinthians 11:7). She reflects him and adds to him. God created her for him (Genesis 2:18; I Corinthians 11:9).

Happiness is found as a person fills the place assigned of God. The wife is none the less because she submits to her husband; the husband is none the greater because he is the head of the wife. The woman is less if she fails to obey God. The man is the worse if he fails to obey God. Being content in our God-assigned roles is the key to happiness.

IV. HARMONY IN THE HOME - LOVE

We have a problem speaking of love because modern interpretation has perverted it. Love is commitment. It is seeking the highest possible good for the beloved. It is a willingness to sacrifice self for the sake of the other. When that kind of spirit prevails in a home, it results in a blessing to each member of that home.

A. Love is the result of the handiwork of God. The man and the woman are not contestants in the home. Neither is to maneuver to bring the other to do his personal will. Rather, each is to be devoted to doing God's will. God created both the male and the female in His own image and

likeness (Genesis 1:27). Man was formed from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7), and woman was formed from a bone taken from man's side (Genesis 2:22). Why should they not live together in love and peace? They are each the work of God.

B. Love is the result of a union before God. He brought the man and the woman together and blessed their union with His own special benediction (Genesis 2:22). He answered prayer in bringing Isaac and Rebekah together (Genesis 24:10-27). He joins together those who make a commitment to be husband and wife. Why should they not live in a relationship of love? God Himself has made them one.

C. Love is the basis of the permanent union under God. It was His intention that *"a man (shall) leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh "* (Genesis 2:24). It was His intention that *"what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder"* (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9). It was His decree that *"the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth"* (Romans 7:2). Such a relationship would be miserable if it was not based on a serious commitment of each member to bring happiness to the life of the other. That commitment to mutual joy makes the restrictions of the marriage bond a delight rather than a burden.

God designed the home to be a reflection of heaven. The husband represents Christ and the wife represents the church (Ephesians 5:22-33) in the divine plan. What a responsibility rests on each to live his assigned role!

Every happy marriage has three persons involved: God, the husband, and the wife. And God must be first. *"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"* (Psalm 127:1).

QUESTIONS

1. Why did God place marriage in human society?
2. In what sense is God the head of the home?
3. In what way is the home the basic institution in society?
4. What are some Bible guidelines for a happy marriage?
5. What is the place of the man in the home?
6. Why does a man need a woman to share his life?
7. What contribution does a good wife make to her husband?
8. How are both man and woman equal before God?
9. How does love provide harmony in the home?
10. How can you apply Psalm 127:1 to your home?