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BUILDING CHRISTIAN HOMES

Psalm 127

INTRODUCTION:

Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.

There is an alarming high percentage of family failure, which is noted today. Therefore, I felt impressed to bring to you some thoughts on this subject - following a note which I received the other day. Which related to me that a couple had lived together, ~~not married~~, and now is seeking a way out. And desiring prayer in their behalf.

The daily papers read - Parents Arrested For Child Abuse Or Neglect.

There are so many enemies of the home today. There is a story, one day, so an Arab legend goes - the Devil presented himself to a man and said -- you are about to die. I can save you from death in anyone of three ways. You can kill your servant, beat your wife, or drink this wine.

Let me think said the man. To kill my favorite servant is impossible. To mistreat my wife is ridiculous. I will drink the wine.

He drank the wine, and being drunk - beat his wife and killed his servant who attempted to defend her.

There are so many problems that come from liquor and so many enemies that are great and are ruining the life of the home. And there is only one safe

way to handle it.

Some parents today say, I don't want my children to be talked too about becoming a Christian. I want them to make up their own minds about religion. Is it possible for a person, even a child, to avoid being influenced. Not unless he lives in a vacuum.

An official of General Foods reported that the typical American family is exposed to over 1500 selling messages in the course of an average day. Family members are exposed to well over 150 T. V. and radio commercials a day. The question ~~there~~ is not a matter of being influenced - it is a matter of who is going to do the influencing. Children are constantly influenced by friends, movies, advertisements, and the climate. And the only fair thing to do is to see that they are influenced by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I read about a soldier who was away from home. And he wrote, it is very funny - but he says nearly every thought I had was about my family. He said the same pictures would come to my mind. I couldn't get them clear. There was my mother. My sister. And my small brother. They were gathered at the supper table for family worship. Just as we used to do, he said, when I was there. And daddy would read the Bible and mother would pray.

And he said, I'll tell you something else - after a moment of silence. That was the thing that kept me going - knowing that they were still gathering for family worship every night, just as they used to do. And knowing that I was in their prayers.

Now children are growing up. And they can't wait for another period. The American home today is suffering. And we need to give some attention to the matter of homemaking. There is hardly a daytime hour that is free. For matters of carrying on the home today and for bringing up children. The mother serves as a nurse, she must teach, and there are so many functions. Then there are the outside activities. The public, the civic league, and all the other odds and ends that go into a day.

There is the matter of disciplining. You may brand yourself as being a little old-fashioned. But in my observations, it has been this - that there are not many children who are angels. And who do not need a good spanking now and then.

We are talking about building Christian homes today. I read where some preacher, when he talked about what Paul had to say about children obeying their parents, etc., that his congregation always accused him that his children were never present in the service when he talked about that.

This Psalm that I have chosen today, except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. It means some very interesting thoughts. Have you ever watched people talk about the building of a new house. They just sit down and pour over blueprints, they discuss the type of architecture, whether to build a low rambling style ranch-type house, or some kind of cometemporary house with glass doors and outdoor living, and some talk about the traditional - the floor plan. How far should the master bedroom be away from the childrens rooms. And if you are locating the guest quarters you want in your home, will this be private enough. The color schemes and the materials. And you select all of this. And you think about your little children and all of this. And you think about what kind of landscape you are going to have. It is an exciting thing when people contemplate planning and building a new house.

But we are here today to think about building something that is far more exciting, and thrilling than building a house. And that's building a Christian home.

Now as we undertake to talk about this, I think we can take an acrostic to pin-point our thoughts. Be very simple, very easy to remember, and we will use the word HOME.

Now what qualities comprize the Christian home. What is it that makes up the Christian home.

I. THE FIRST LETTER IN HOME IS "H"

So we ask are we building a (hotel or a haven.) Edgar Guest said it takes a heap of living in a house to make it a home!

The problem in American life today is that our houses aren't lived in enough. It has become a generation that is more like a hotel.

The home was once the center of all activities. It becomes a stopping off place to grab a sandwich, hang our hat up in the evening, and then shed our grouches.

In the whole busy bee atmosphere, in which we find ourselves, more and more entangled - we scarcely have time to become acquainted with members of our own family. The problem is really acute. Because seldom does the whole family get together for even one meal during the day.

Sometimes good things become the enemies of the best. Here is Susie, she must go to the Tri-Hi-Y. Here is Dick, he must go to Little League practice. And here is Bert, who is due back at school for band rehearsal. And here is mother, she has a committee meeting to promote the sale of tickets, for the P. T. A. And here is daddy, he has a special meeting that he has to attend too. Now these good things are becoming enemies of the best.

It is easy to construct a good house. It is not easy to construct and create a good home.

Victor Hugo said, "a house is built of logs and stone. Of tiles and posts, and piers. A home is built of living deeds that stand a thousand years."

You ask a personal question - is your home a hotel or a haven, for your family. The haven of rest for your husband, the place of refuge for your children. Or is only a house with a sign out in front that reads ("room and board").

Joe Wilbur Chapman put his finger on the sensitive spot - "give me the privilege of reading the names of your guests, the friends whom you delight to have in your house, the privilege of seeing the title of the books on the shelves of your library, the magazines you permit to come into your home, to listen to your conversation, when you do not know you are being overheard. Allow me to say a word or two - to put a pointed question to the servants in your household. Then permit me to talk to your chosen friends. Then I will give you a perfect picture of your home, though I may not be personally acquainted with you. I will (tell you) what you have been in the past, what you are in the present, and what you will be in the future. What you have in your home, determines what your home is.

Who could doubt but what that is true. H stands for hotel or it stands for haven. Except the Lord build the house, there will be just a hotel. It is a building. If there is to be a haven, the Lord must help to build it.

II. THE WORD (O)

And the question comes, are we rearing (orphans or off-springs) Somebody has said that babies are bits of stardust blown from their finger tips of God.

I think it is so true, children are the best mortar that ever held the home together. The children which come as the fruit of our marriage, produce a divine solidary. With them comes a grave responsibility, at the same time.

Some of us have a (false) impression that rearing children involves no more than bearing them, feeding them, clothing them, and sheltering them.

Far from it! We have many orphans today. Orphans, who have parents. Orphans who are not found in the orphanages scattered out over our land. We have some orphans that live in the loveliest homes, accepted in social circles, some of them are going to finishing schools, (we have (study club) orphans, we have (country club) orphans, we have (civic club) orphans, and we even have (church) orphans. Some women are so wrapped up in these pet projects, that they don't have time to be parents to the children.

A little story was told about a (busy bee woman) who went to a meeting for the improvement of parks on Monday. A study club on Tuesday. Ladies Aid on Wednesday.

Garden Club on Thursday. And a lecture on Home Economics Friday. Hurrying home late for supper. She saw a dirty little boy playing in a mud puddle. She corrected him, and had unkind thoughts about his parents. She asked him where he lived. The dirty, spattered boy, looked at her wide eyes - "Mommy, don't you know me." Orphans born into a home may be created by neglect.

One woman says perhaps the most important thing that I have learned in over 20 years of working with boys is this - there is (no short-cut) to being a good parent. There is no easy way. There is no substitute for time and effort.

Now the word (off-spring) means literally what it says. A child springs off from what the parent is. You and I are holding little plastic plyable life within our hands, and molding personalities to reflect our own image. Our children become our miniatures.

It is an over-whelming thought that God should chose weak and perfect vessels to guide faltering little steps. God has chosen amateurs - to carry out the most important task in the world - that of rearing children. And this tells us God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. And having chosen parents to do the job - he does not leave us alone. He is our helper.

Even in our generation, there is difficulty with communications. Our culture keeps the home in an uproar. As to what an adult is. As a driver of a car, a person may have this adult privilege at 16. But he cannot get a job that will pay for a car at the age of 16. Even as a 16 year old drives, his parent's insurance goes up and doubles. The state law treats him as an adult. The insurance company treats him as a child. And a person cannot marry until he is 18 - unless they have the parents consent. Want ads for (jobs) will often say, do not apply if you are under 25. And so this lengthens out infancy. Parents have to think about whether this child is going to be an orphan or whether he is

going to be a true off-spring.

Here is a challenge -

Reach down your hand

The little one that trudges by your side

Is striving hard to match your grown-up stride

But, oh, his feet are very tiny yet

His arm, so short, I pray you don't forget

Reach down your hand

Keep soft your voice

For it was such a little while ago

This small one left the place

Where tones are low

His voice still holds the cadence of that land.

Where one never made a harsh or bitter sound

Keep soft your voice.

Lift up your heart, the little child you struggle so to teach

His resources far above the human reach

Lift up your heart.

Except the Lord build the house

There will be orphans

But if he builds it, there will be off-springs.

III. THE THIRD LETTER "M" WILL IT BE (MAINTENANCE OR MOTHERHOOD)

This is so important. A little child one day came to his mother and questioned - your name is Mary, isn't it. Yes, she answered, my name is Mary. Your name is

Mary Jones, isn't it. Yes, that's my name. But your real name is Mother, isn't it. Yes, that's my real name.

The mother today in this 20th century is called by (many names). Sometimes she is called President, Board Member, Lecturer, Chairman, Committee Member, Sunday School Teacher, but always and primarily - we must know that the important name of Mother. Mother is not a biological phenomenon. It is not merely domestic work that is dull. It is not merely a job - it is a holy calling. As Elton Trueblood says, "behold, your calling."

Ruth Graham calls herself a homemaker by divine appointment. You do not have a profession. You do not have a vocation. But you have a ministry. And under God you can be a divine minister with the stamp of eternity upon it.

There are often mothers I know who feel frustrated, defeated, discouraged. With a multitude of details of housekeeping and rearing children. And I know they often come to the end of the day, wondering, what have I really accomplished today. In what way have I served Christ this day. But this is where Pauline Trueblood gives encouragement. Sometimes a wife or mother is doing her best work - when she is seemingly doing nothing. When she takes time regularly to read to pre-schooler. When she stops to plant a carrot (seed) for a four year old. When he basically explains to another child that the lovely rose bud must be returned to the next door neighbor. From whose garden it came. And she listens - or when she listens to the sound of a sea shell, with a youngster. Or when she takes time on a trip to stop and pick a wild flower.

This is not time wasted - far from it. Now we do not have a yardstick by which we can measure our achievements. Let us not forget that we are moulding life - and we are not just maintaining a home.

Mothers today complain that they do not have freedom. Here is a career woman who gets out into the world and makes contacts and has influence. Instead mothers today feel they are encumbered with a taxi-cab service for the teenager. Or the car pool for the kindergarten bunch. Helping with school lessons, running household errands, running to the market, cooking, cleaning, housecleaning.

Peter Marshall placed a plaque over the kitchen sink. Divine services are held here three times a day. Housekeeping itself is part of a divine calling. It becomes sacred when it is performed as of the Lord.

Hal Boyle, in one of his columns says, the greatest woman in history is the housewife. But too often she has an inferiority complex. At party sometimes there are career women present. The housewife will murmur when she is introduced - "I'm nobody. I don't do anything - I am just a housewife." Actually of course, she is proud of being a housewife. She feels that nobody else thinks her job is either important or thrilling. But few professional career women live a life 1/2 as exciting, or satisfying as that of the ordinary housewife. Motherhood, the art of raising children, is an endless drama. It is filled with adventure. And I can see where it is a tremendous importance.

Daniel Webster expressed the matter of motherhood, when he said, "if we work upon marble it will perish. If we work upon brass, time will deface it. If we rear temples they will crumble to dust. If we work upon men's mortal minds, if we in view them with principles - we engrave on these tablets something that no time can deface, and will brighten and heighten to all eternity."

Therefore, M stands for motherhood. Not just the maintenance of a house.

IV. OUR LAST LETTER IS "E"

And as we think of this, your home will be built of earth or of eternity - which?

Acts 5:42 - Not for a single day did they cease to teach and preach the Gospel of Jesus the Christ in temple and at home.

Above all else, we must make Christ the heart and center of our home. He is the foundation upon which to build the super structure.

This is where the husband and wife can both work together.

God never changes - but men and women sometimes do.

And old farmer and his wife were driving to town on Saturday. They were going along the road and the wife sat next to the door. On the passenger side of the car. During a lull in the conversation, the wife said, "honey, remember when we sat close to each other. Look at us now."

The husband looked at her lovingly and said, "I ain't moved an inch."

Now isn't this a tremendous picture of most of us. We get saved - we couldn't get close enough to Jesus. But as time goes by, we begin to sit on the other side. We need to take off on another honeymoon with Jesus Christ. And we need to do this in our home.

Now anybody can build a house - but we need the Lord for a creation of a home. The Christian religion claims to be able to convert houses into homes.

The New Testament does not say very much about homes. It says a great deal

about the things that make homes - which speaks of life. It speaks of love, joy, life, peace, gentleness, meekness, goodness, faith. And if we get a house and put these into it - we shall have a home.

Paul Calvin Payne says having a Christian home means far more than a house full of nice people who treat each other fairly and are kind and who go to church once in a while. It means a house he says where Christ is known, and loved, and served. And children come to know Him through their parents. Where eyes see far out there that there is a world that can be won to Christ.

✓ Many of you have either heard about or you have seen the T. V. program called "The Waltons". It so happens that on Thursday nights throughout this country, that from 8-9, The Waltons is televised. And the American family comes on so you can get a massive dose of what is worrying us about the family in an hour of T. V. watching. Now this family is based on an old novel called "The Homecoming". The family is poor, rural, and they live in the desperate depression era. They have no stereo, no hi-fi, no swimming pool, no guitars, no freezer. They have one car. They are scraping at the edge of poverty. They have a large family of brothers and sisters, in which the grandmother and grandfather, and other (assorted relatives) seem to live under the same roof. They all share the chores on the farm and the Mother leads them in the study of the Bible. All of them go to (church) and somehow as we watch The Waltons, we feel warm and secure. But there is a (nagging suspicion) that intrudes - that life really isn't like that. To some extent, we take this as a romance for a certain era. Which may not have been all that good when it existed. Now some people here in this service remember the depression period. Others remember your grandparents talking about it.

V(4) - As arrows are in the hands of a mighty man.

And happy is the man that has his quiver full of them.

Think about The Waltons and their children - the Lord said through the Psalms, here is a varying assortment of children in the family and in the home. They are a heritage he says. And each one has a purpose and a place in life. They are like arrows in the hands of a mighty man. They help in the battle of life. And he says, like an arrow that is well aimed. So the children need to be well aimed. Therefore Christianity is more caught than taught. We each teach our child about God. Whether you are aware of it, your actions speak louder than your words. Your attitudes, your conversation, and your interest all speak.

I read about a five year old boy the other day. They were in the kitchen and his mother was preparing a meal. She was singing, "Onward Christian Soldiers" - and suddenly he stopped and he said, Mommy, are they on our side. Already in his mind he had an impression that Christianity was a militant affair. Now this thing falls upon your shoulders and upon mine.

More than anything else in this world - every woman, wife, and husband should have a desire to build a Christian home for their children. That ought to be the primary goal in your life. And how are you going to do it. In the fear and in the admonition of the Lord. One thing you are going to do, by family devotional period. Another thing you are going to do, you are going to have grace or prayer at your meals. And another thing that you are going to do, you are going to be faithful in church attendance. And another thing that is important is, that by the way you live everyday as a parent, you must show them the way of the Master and the way to the Master. We want Christ himself to be the host of our home. We want him to be the unseen guest at every meal. And money can make a house.

A beautiful custom is the dedication of the new home. The family usually invites some of their relatives and a few of their closest friends. A large gathering is not helpful for this dedication service.

There are various scriptures which lend themselves to such an occasion. The 127th Psalm has been called the song of the home. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 lays emphasis on religion in the home.

After the scripture lesson the pastor may read an appropriate poem. Any one of the following would be suitable:

O thou whose gracious presence blest
The home at Bethany,
This shelter from the world's unrest,
This home made ready for its Guest,
We dedicate to thee.

We build an altar here, and pray

Christ at the marriage altar.
Christ on the bridal journey.
Christ when the new home is set up.
Christ when the baby comes.
Christ when the baby dies.
Christ in the pinching times.
Christ in the days of plenty.
Christ when the wedded pair walk
toward the sunset gates.
Christ for time, Christ for eternity.

* * *

In order that the family may have an active share in the dedication, I have prepared this brief dedicatory service. The longer part may be read either by the pastor or, in a large family, by the father. The response should be made by all members of the family.

Pastor: To the glory of God and the building of his kingdom

Please allow me to be quite personal in this spiritual venture. Mrs. Murphy and I started an altar in our home before our first baby was born, and we have kept it up over the years. Words are inadequate to express what it has meant to us. Each of our six children accepted Jesus as Saviour before he reached eight years of age and it was easy to lead them into the deeper life with God. One who is away from home now wrote home not long since saying, "I wish I could be home today and have part in family worship, especially in singing some good old hymn. I miss it more than you will ever know."

We usually have our worship at the breakfast table. We read or quote Scripture, read from *Open Windows*, sing a song and have prayer. Quite often we tell some experience in dealing with some one or give an answer to prayer.

What can the pastor do in helping

Add love, you have a home. Add Christ, and you have the house that God can build. So "E" stands for earth or eternity. Except the Lord build it - it is going to crumble to the earth because it is not built on eternity. It is like the wise man who built his on the rock. The foolish man built his house on the sand. The storms and the tests came - and they were destroyed.

There is one line of poetry that fits in Sidney Lanier "From the marshes of Glynn."

"As the marsh hen secretly builds on the watery sod, behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God."

Is your home a hotel or a haven.

Are your children orphans or off-springs.

A place where motherhood or maintenance is practiced.

And finally, the foundation is of earth or eternity.

Joshua - "as for me & my house we will serve the Lord"