

*Christian
Living
in the*

HOME



Jay E. Adams

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CHRIST CENTERED HOME

Is it possible to have a Christ centered home in today's world of trouble and sin? If you are a Christian you are concerned about this problem. You may be concerned mostly because you recognize that your home falls far short of any such description. If this is true, it is by no means true of you and your home alone. You are in the company of many

other Christians who, in their frank moments, will tell you that they too are facing the same difficulty. Let's not fool ourselves. For the most part, Christian homes come pitifully short of the Biblical norms; and we are all aware of it.

Well then, perhaps we should begin by asking the question, What does a truly Christian home look like? Is it an idyllic place where peace and quiet, tranquillity and joy continuously reign? Definitely not! The first and most important fact to remember about a truly Christian home is that *sinners live there*.

The notion that the Christian home is a perfect or near perfect place is decidedly not Biblical. The parents in the home fail; often they fail miserably. They fail one another, they fail their children, and they certainly fail God. The children fail too. They bring home report cards with Ds and Fs, throw tantrums in the shopping mall, and try to eat peas off their knives when the preacher has been invited to dinner. Husbands and wives quarrel, get irritated with one another, and sometimes have serious misunderstandings. Of course, there are accomplishments too; but the point that I want to make is that conditions frequently are far from ideal. That is the realistic picture of a truly Christian home.

Perhaps you are wondering how such a description differs from that of the house next door, in which there is no one who makes a profession of faith in Christ. You may be wondering, "Why did he describe a truly Christian home in those terms?" The answer is simple: this is exactly what the Bible throughout gives us reason to expect among saved but yet imperfect persons. In fact, the whole Book deals from beginning to end with how Christ saves men from their sins. Salvation is complete; it involves justification, sanctification, and glorification. By grace, through faith, God justifies believers in an instantaneous act. That is to say, Christ died for His people in order that the penalty for their sins might be paid and His righteousness might be counted to them. They are declared just before God when they believe. Once justified, Christ saves them from the power of their sins through the *lifelong process* of sanctification. In sanctification, Chris-

tians are made more and more like Jesus Christ. But a lifelong process never ends, and the final goal is never reached until death. At death, Christians are glorified; they are then made completely perfect for the first time. But during this life, Christians continue to sin.

"But how," you may insist, "does your description differ from the description of the unsaved family next door?" This question needs to be answered. In the answer lies the message of this book.

A truly Christian home is a place where sinners live; but it is also a place where the members of that home admit the fact and understand the problem, know what to do about it, and as a result grow by grace. Let us look in more detail at three significant differences that make all the difference in the world.

1. **Christians admit their sins.** Because they know the Bible says that no Christian is ever perfect in this life (cf. 1 John 1:8-10), Christians are able to acknowledge the fact and, in time, learn to anticipate and prepare for sin. They, of all persons, should never rely upon rationalizations, excuses, or blameshifting (although, of course, as sinners they sometimes do) to try to euphemize their sins. They do not have to cover up, for all Christians know that all Christians sin. There can be, therefore, a certain amount of openness, honesty, and relaxation about the relationships that Christians sustain to one another, especially in the home. I am by no means suggesting that we may be relaxed about sin; exactly not that. What I am trying to say, however, is that Christians do not need to spend anxious hours of futile endeavor trying to cover their tracks. They do not need to think up ways to deceive the fellow next door into thinking that they are sterling specimens of humanity. They may freely admit what they know is true: that they have failed to do the will of God. With the freedom to admit the truth comes the possibility of repentance, and with repentance they can expect forgiveness and help from God and from one another. Christians can progress rapidly out of sinful living patterns as a result. They can pour their time and energies into the endeavor

or to replace sinful patterns with Biblical patterns of life. Rather than wasting time minimizing or denying the fact of sin, Christians can concentrate on dealing with sin.

Parents certainly can take a lot of the unnecessary grief out of child raising when, as a matter of course (rather than becoming falsely shocked over the fact), they expect their children to do wrong things at home, at school, and in public. There is then no necessity to subject children to unusual and inappropriate discipline or to the excessive anger that sometimes grows out of embarrassment. Once parents are prepared to admit that the Biblical doctrine of original sin is true not only in theory, but is operative as well in the life of little Mary or Johnny, they can relax and deal with the problem appropriately (Biblically). Again, this does not mean that they will excuse or ignore sinful behavior in their children, or that they will be unconcerned about it as something inevitable and, therefore, about which nothing can be done. No, not that at all. Rather, they will acknowledge sin for what it is and will proceed to deal with it in a Biblical manner. All of which leads to the second difference:

2. Christians know what to do about their sins. Because they have the Bible as the standard of faith and practice, Christians not only know why problems occur in the home, but they know what to do about them. Thus the truly Christian home differs from the home next door in that it can use Biblical precepts and examples successfully to handle and recoup from every occurrence of sin. This, again, is a significant difference. The Bible not only contains directions about what to do when one or more members of the family fall into sin; it goes beyond this and shows what to do to assure that there will be no such future failure. Because this book largely is devoted to a consideration of many of the most common problems found in the Christian home, I will not enlarge upon this point here.

3. Christians progress out of their sins. Where there is spiritual life, there also will be spiritual growth. No Christian can remain the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. A fundamental presupposition of the Christian faith is that

there will be growth out of sin into righteousness. Where there is Bible study, prayer, witness, and the fellowship of the saints, the Spirit of God will be at work to produce His fruit. That fruit is righteousness. This book deals also with many of the ways in which the Bible may be used preventively in Christian homes to avoid the trials and problems that the family next door must face simply because they have no such standard.

The Christian home, then, is a place where sinful persons face the problems of a sinful world. Yet, they face them together with God and His resources, which are all centered in Christ (cf. Col. 2:3). Sinners live in the Christian home, but the sinless Savior lives there too. That is what makes the difference!

Building a strong family is a challenge in the best of times.

How much more when marriage is being redefined, biblical approaches to discipline are under constant fire, and "family values" is more a campaign slogan than a personal priority of elected officials.

The family is in trouble today. Stable homes have become a quaint anomaly, rather than the norm. To check the erosion of the home and family as the basic unit of society, Jay Adams calls us to a careful understanding and application of scriptural principles.

Christians will find this volume full of practical, biblical advice on Christ-centered family living, communicating with family members, family guidance and discipline, living with an unbelieving spouse, and many other areas. Pastors, counselors, and study groups will value this work for its insight, clarity, and faithfulness to God's Word.

Jay E. Adams is best known for his many books on counseling and Christian living, including *Competent to Counsel*, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, and *Solving Marriage Problems*. He served for many years on the faculties of Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia) and Westminster Theological Seminary in California, and founded the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation in Glenside, Pennsylvania. Retired from the pastorate, Dr. Adams continues to write and speak on counseling and Christian living issues.

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