

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Ten Principles to Having a Spiritual Family

God has a purpose for our lives and for the homes where each one lives. Success or failure depends on whether or not we have a vision for what our homes will be like (Proverbs 29:18). Your family will not automatically reach where you hope it will be years from now. Just as any company or business enterprise must have a mission statement in order to succeed, a family must also do the same. Your mission, should you choose it, is to have a spiritual family. Prayerfully apply the following.

1. Be a committed husband and wife (Matthew 19:6). This is not just commitment which avoids divorce, but a commitment which wants to be married. Someone is loyal who has the desire to remain with their spouse because it is what God wants them to do.

2. Spend time together (Proverbs 29:15; Ephesians 5:15-16). Everyone in the home will love the time you can spend with each other. Busyness and loneliness are the two greatest enemies facing every family. If we let busyness get in the way, someone will be isolated. Isolation gives Satan the time he needs to bring

resentment, bitterness, and jealousy into our homes, causing division, dissension, and discord.

3. Have a godly value system and keep it (2 Timothy 1:5, 7; Ephesians 6:4). What are your beliefs? In what does your faith lie? Does everyone understand where God is in your home? Does your family realize the impact it has on other families in the world? If there is inconsistency in values, there will be a tendency toward hypocrisy in your home.

4. Have faith to cope with crisis (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Families who love God can, and will face trials. Abraham's did. Noah's did. Jesus' did. Will your family run away, be afraid, or lose their love for God? God provides grace every family needs to cope with the unexpected. His strength is what every family needs when difficulties come (James 1:2-4).

5. Remember the Builder (Psalm 127:1; Hebrews 3:4). Each father, mother, and child must know what God expects of them when their home is built. Build your home by His blueprints. Let God help you build it with knowledge, wisdom, and understanding (Proverbs 24:3-4).

6. Be watchful for evil (Ephesians 5:7-11; 1 Peter 5:8). Satan does not care what form of evil you allow to enter your house (TV, friends, books, etc.). It will be a daily challenge to remove every appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22). One way to know if evil has entered your home is how well those who live there think on things that are honest, pure, just, true, lovely, and of good report (Philippians 4:8).

7. Ask God every day to bless your home (2 Samuel 7:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Everyone in your home should pray to God for His help, love, grace, and care. When a home prays together, they stay together.

8. Choose every day to serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15). The homes in society follow the sounds and actions of the world. What the world does, they do. No matter what our culture says, let your home choose God's ways. It may not be popular to serve God, but it is the right thing to do.

9. Worship God together (Exodus 10:9; 12:24-28; Deuteronomy 31:12-13; Psalm 100). You cannot be spiritual unless you make time to worship the One who is a spirit. In the Old Testament whole families would gather to hear God's law and observe the requirements of the law. A family draws closest to the one to whom they give the most honor. Be consistent. Be diligent. Be present.

10. Train your family to see and understand the consequences of sinful action. Warn your family of the consequences of repeating the immorality and ungodly actions of others (Heb 3:12-13). The same thing that happened to them can and will happen to you (Gal 6:7-8).

As a bonus: **11. Remember the Master of your home [the Lord] will return (Mark 13:34-35).** Be aware each day your house belongs to the Lord. One day the Lord will return and ask how you used your home. "Set thy house in order" (2 Kings 20:1).

- Shawn Bain

The People of God

On four different occasions in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses summoned the people to receive instruction from the Lord by saying, "Hear, O Israel..." (5:1; 6:4; 9:1; 20:3). Someone has stated that it ought to be a matter of encouragement to every sane person that God has spoken to us.

Just prior to fording the Jordan River into the Promised Land, "Moses and the priests spoke to all Israel, saying, 'Take heed and listen, O Israel; This day you have become the people of God. Therefore you shall obey the voice of the Lord your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes which I command you today'" (Deuteronomy 27:9). There is something significant about being called the people of God. While I write that I know none would dispute it though some by their teaching and practice make it void.

What it meant to be the people of God is that they were to "take heed" to what God says. It is not merely acknowledging that God has spoken. It is not some mere exercise in the reading and recitation of some facts. It is to give one's self over to what God says for the sole purpose of obeying. One is not taking heed who argues, complains and becomes disgruntled with the message of God. A chief characteristic of the people of God is that they respond to God's word without questioning, rationalizing otherwise discounting the word to mean anything more or less than what it says. Furthermore, they do not allow circumstances, whether

convenient or not, to determine whether or not they heed God's commands.

It is interesting to note Moses tells Israel to "Take heed and listen." Why this order of "take heed" and "listen?" Moses had reminded Israel earlier that they were a special people to God (26:16-19) and with that comes not only privileges but solemn responsibilities which should be carried out with all their heart and soul. To listen then, is another mark of the people of God, it indicates their readiness and willingness to hear God whenever and wherever He speaks. Again someone has well noted that listening is the beginning of all understanding (James 1:19-20). Thus, to listen is an expression of dependence on God; as obedience (from the heart and soul) is an expression of gratitude toward God by those who are called the people of God.

God speaks today through His Son Jesus Christ and it is contained in the New Testament (Hebrews 1:1-3; John 12:48-50). Can we do any less today, with respect to God's instructions through His Son, than "take heed and listen" if we truly desire to be the people of God? While Israel, the people of God, under the Old Testament received the earthly promised land, the Hebrew writer reminds those today under the New Covenant "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). Let us, "Take heed and listen."

- Bill Robinson, Jr.

Complaining Christians

"Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world." (Philippians 2:14-15)

Few things can be more destructive to a child's future (both earthly and heavenly) as a propensity to whine and complain. Such is the manner of those who are ungrateful, greedy and self-seeking. Continued grumbling and griping is evidence that a child has successfully trained his parents to cater to his wantonness, placing in jeopardy not only the child, but also the parents (Proverbs 22:6; Deuteronomy 6:7; Ephesians 6:4). If the routine is not broken (Proverbs 2:15; 23:13-14), the murmuring child will become a murmuring adult, and an irritation to his peers.

Recall, when God brought the children of Israel from Egypt, they were a nation of complainers (Exodus 15:24; 16:2; 17:3). The apostle Paul candidly states, "...with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness." (1 Corinthians 10:5) He cites the things which happened to them as "...our example, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted." (v. 6) Friend, you and I are not to "...complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer." (v. 10)

A Christian complaining is no more acceptable than any child or the nation Israel doing so. If the Lord commands that we "drive it far" from the child, and if He scattered the Israelite bodies in the

wilderness on account of their murmuring, then surely we can understand that such has no place in the child of God. The context of Philippians 2 supplies Jesus as our great example, through His obedience in going to the cross. Recall, the prophet wrote of Him, "...as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth." (Isaiah 53:7) If he endured such hostility and pain for us, without complaint, shouldn't we endeavor to serve Him daily without complaint?

Understand, my friend, our standing as children of God depends upon us laying aside all murmuring. If we are to shine as lights in this world, it will be through faithful obedience, and the knowledge that we are to be "blameless and harmless", not whiners and complainers.

- William J. Stewart

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Achan's Sin!*" (text: Josh. 7:19-26);
Sunday evening: "*HABAKKUK: The Righteous Will Live By His Faith!*"