

# When a House Becomes a Home

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The words *house* and *home* are often used interchangeably. A \$350,000 house may be called a “beautiful home” when it is full of hatred, strife, and unhappiness. It is only a beautiful house. However, a very modest house may truly be a beautiful home because within its walls there is love, peace, and happiness. A house is **where** a family lives. A home is **how** a family lives. A home begins with a man and a woman who become husband and wife. Therefore, what any home is or is not rests completely on their shoulders. The elements that constitute an ideal home are both recognizable and attainable.

The most important part of a good house is a solid foundation. A weak foundation will fail and bring ruin to the house that rests on it. The same is true of a home. The lack of an adequate foundation is why so many homes are breaking up. The only foundation strong enough to support a strong, solid home is a spiritual one. This involves an earnest attempt on the part of both husband and wife to live according to the great life-principles of the Bible (e.g., unselfishness, honesty, purity, kindness, and the like.). Before this concept is rejected as too difficult in our modern world, one should consider how painful it is to experience a broken home. God created us and he knows the best way for us to live. If a husband and wife are faithful to God's Word, they cannot be unfaithful to each other. When there is no spiritual foundation, selfishness becomes the supreme standard of conduct, bringing misery and strife.

Another element of a happy home is loyalty. No relationship on earth deserves more mutual dedication than that of marriage. God decreed this from the beginning (Gen. 2:24), and His Will has not changed concerning it (Mat. 19:4–5). It is a relationship in which each gives up self for the other (Eph. 5:25). This means that one's spouse must come before parents, friends, job, recreation, or any other earthly relationship or concern. A husband or wife **should** not be secondary to any other person and **will** not be without unhappiness.

A home cannot be the happy entity God intended without faithful expression of mutual admiration between husband and wife. The practice of the “golden rule” is all-important in a marriage. If consistently used, this one thing would restore joy and happiness to tens of thousands of sick marriages and prevent countless divorces. Husbands and wives should build each other up. Instead, seeking petty revenge, some will wait till they have an

audience and then begin belittling their spouse. Such is a tragic and immature act. One should never take a mate for granted but keep up the “courtship.” Such things make a marriage grow sweeter and better with time.

Another essential ingredient of the happy home is respect for God's plan of authority in the home. Every institution, whether secular or spiritual, requires someone to shoulder responsibility for leadership and authority—a place “where the buck stops.” In the church, it is Christ. In the home, it is the husband and/or father: “For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the Head of the church” (Eph. 5:23). This is the consistent teaching of the Bible in numerous places, regardless of the modern philosophies that strip husbands of their authority. Let it be emphasized that this is **God-given** authority, not a humanly devised plan. Such authority of a husband does not imply that the wife is inferior to her husband. It does not mean that the wife has no right to freely speak her mind or hold her own opinions and convictions. Neither does it give any man the right to abuse his wife, physically or in any other way, as a despot that rules with an iron hand.

The authority of the husband involves the responsibility of leadership, relating to both spiritual and material needs. After consideration of the needs and desires of each member of the family, he must choose the best course. One would be a fool not to consult his wife in making major decisions. When all has been considered and decided, the husband should receive the cooperative respect of his wife. I have known thousands of married couples and have, over many years, counseled with hundreds of couples concerning their problems. Never have I seen a happy or ideal home situation where God's plan of authority for the home was ignored.

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