

# LIFESAVERS

A Life Group of the Tusculum Church of Christ

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*The 2007-2008 LifeSavers "Homebuilders" Study Series*

## "The Christian Family"

**1 Corinthians 13:13**

**Galatians 6:2**

**Ephesians 6:1-3**

**Matthew 7:24-25**

**Matthew 25:21**



### Introduction

Admiral Richard E. Byrd told a story of some tense moments during his first expedition to the South Pole. For a time he was living alone in an isolated hut far from any other members of the expedition. One day he left the hut for a brief exploratory trip only to be engulfed in a sudden blizzard, leaving him hopelessly lost. Nothing in that barren whiteness gave him a sense of direction. If he struck out blindly and failed, he would surely freeze in the storm. He always carried a long pole to feel for holes in the ice, so he tied a scarf to it and stuck it in the snow. In telling the experience he said, "That was my center. If I failed to find my hut, I could return to the center and try again. Three times I tried and failed; but each time I returned to my center, without which I would have been lost and would have died. In the fourth attempt, I stumbled upon my hut."



His expression, "that was my center," played a central role. Just as the pole and scarf were the center to which Admiral Byrd continually returned and by which his life was saved, so the home is center in our society. As we come into this world and as we grow up amid the confusing complexities of life, home is our center. To it we return again and again. In it we find rest and strength. It provides a base from which to operate and without it we are unstable and insecure.

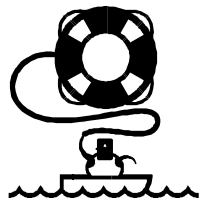
In *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx attacked the home. He wrote ". . . The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course, with the vanishing of capital." Marx denied that the Biblical concepts of the family were in the best interest of society. His ideal was to switch the "cultural center of gravity" from the home to public institutions. Breaking up the family was not just incidental to his plans; it was a central part of the plan. "As long as the family unit remains strong and retains its cultural independence," he said, "the state cannot claim complete supremacy."

It is interesting to note, however, that communism tried, and then rejected the philosophy of Marx concerning the family. At first they made divorce easy and sexual promiscuity was encouraged. Mothers were taken from homes and placed in labor groups while children became wards of the state. Soon, however, it became

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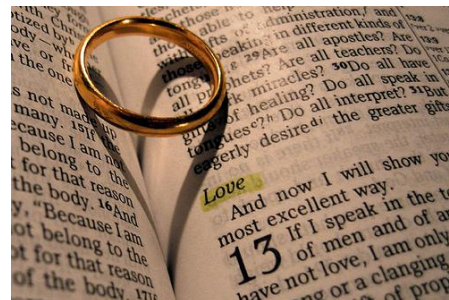
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obvious that the state was endangered, so they swung back to the necessity of family ties—though certainly apart from Christian family concepts. Since we believe that the Christian family is the answer to many, if not most, of our modern-day problems, some of the characteristics of the Christian home are now considered.

## Characteristics of the Christian Family

**1. A truly Christian, Christ-like family means that its members treat each other as each would like to be treated.** Christ Himself taught this: ". . . whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). While Jesus commanded this for all relationships, it certainly has special bearing within a Christian family.



**2. Each Christian member of the family is the foundation of a strong home.** During some marriage ceremonies today, Scripture is read. Then, at the end of the ceremony this might be said: "May the lord bless this reading of His Word. May the truths found in this Book be the foundation on which your home is established." We know of no other home-foundation that even compares with the teachings of the Christian faith.

**3. The Christian family worships together.** It is always inspiring to see families sitting together in public worship. It is heartwarming to see father, mother, and children—singing and praying together. Christian families read the Scriptures and discuss spiritual truths at home. Nothing is more natural than a Christian family spending time together in study and prayer together.

**4. Christian principles provide each family member the power "to see it through," regardless of outside pressures.** Serious illness, separation (like a husband spending two or three years away fighting terrorism), financial stress—all great family burdens. However, the basic principles of the Christian faith give a family the deep roots necessary to face any and all burdens—outside pressures, and to see them through.

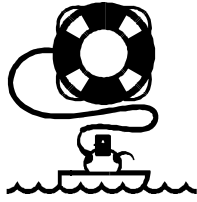
**5. The Christian family shares every joy and blessing—every burden and sorrow.** Paul wrote: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). Family members rejoice in the successes and triumphs of each loved one. Likewise, each share in the disappointments and sorrows of each loved one. Each family member is deeply concerned for the good of the others. Concerning our Lord's concern for His mother, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote: "Even He that died for us upon the cross, in the last hour, in the unfathomable agony of death, was mindful of His mother, as if to teach us that holy love should be our last worldly thought—the last point on earth from which the soul should take its flight for heaven." If Christ was so concerned for His mother's care, surely we should be concerned for the care of each member of our family.

**6. The sense of belonging is a constant source of strength.** Someone has said that loneliness is the most frightening feeling in the world. In a day when the population is ever increasing, it is a paradox that we have more loneliness than ever. The ties of love that bind a family together largely eliminate the feeling of loneliness.

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**7. The Christian father does not provoke his children to wrath, but nurtures them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.** This charge was made by the Apostle Paul to all Christian fathers in Ephesians 6:4.

**8. The Christian son and daughter obey their parents in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-3).** In Matthew 15, Jesus reaffirmed the



ancient law: "Honor your father and your mother." He strongly rebuked those scribes and Pharisees who sought loopholes in the law and ways of avoiding it. He said, ". . . you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition."

**9. Open honesty and integrity, with a complete absence of the false front and hypocrisy characterizes the Christian home, making complete confidence and trust possible.** There is so much today that is artificial—just sham and front. However, all this is excluded in the Christian home. Here there must be complete honesty—parents with children and children with parents.

**10. Parents listen to children, trying to see things through their eyes before making decisions.** This is not to say that our children are to make the decisions, but as Christian parents we try to understand and consider our children's feelings and needs, along with other factors, in making decisions.

**11. In the Christian family, false, critical, and malicious judgments are avoided.** Jesus said, "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:1-3)

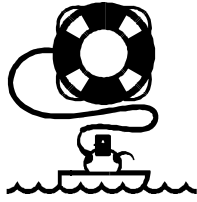
**12. Since grudge-bearing toward enemies is not to be tolerated, it stands to reason that forgiveness, peace, harmony and understanding prevails in the Christian home.** Christ taught His disciples, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies . . . and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:43-44). If Christ's disciples are to pray for and love their enemies, surely such behavior would be on an even higher level of love and respect within the family.

**13. Members of a Christian family have a true sense of value.** These values include such things as, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21). Also, ". . . we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18). Christians have a solid set of values to measure everything.

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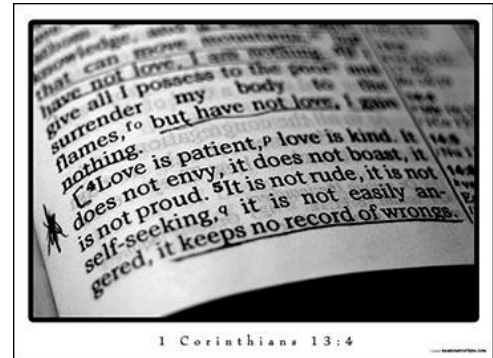
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**14. In a Christian home each member (unlike those described by Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:12 as being "not wise"), knows how to act in any situation.** Because of guidance and training in the home, children learn how to react to the temptations—they have understanding.

**15. The attitude of each member toward life assures success.**

At the end of His great Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock" (Matthew 7:24-25). Those who are nurtured and grounded in the Christian faith from childhood to maturity have attitudes, habits, and behavior patterns that make them successful relating to others, earning a living, and in all aspects of life.



**16. Although the human element is always present, Christian restraint enables each family member to overcome evil with good rather than being overcome by evil.** "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

**17. Because they have been transformed, young members of the Christian family are not enamored with conformity to the world.**

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:1-2).

**18. In these days of permissiveness, the Christian boy or girl finds strength to "abstain from the very appearance of . . ." or "form of evil."**

**19. In a time of political doubt, Christians make the best citizens.** The Scriptures say, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves" (Romans 13:1-2).

**20. The Christian family enjoys one of life's greatest commodities—hope.** This is the hope of sharing eternal life in heaven with the Lord. Hope is "an anchor of the soul . . . sure and steadfast" (Hebrews 6:19).

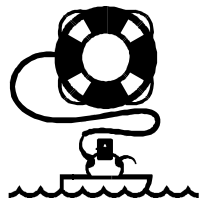
## More Christian Homes

The alarming problems of our day can best be solved by more Christian homes and by homes that are more Christian. Someone said, "It is my conviction that



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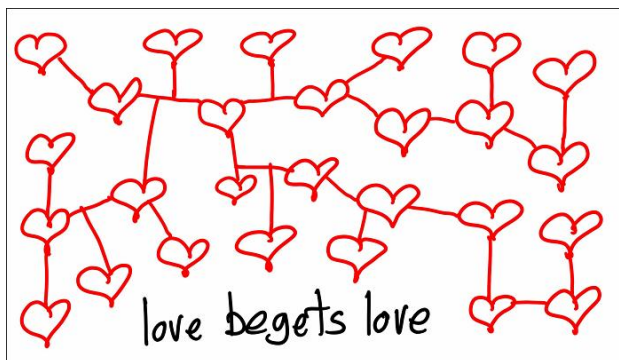
most of today's problems can be traced to the breakdown of the home." Perhaps, but we prefer not to blame the home for all failures in society. Certainly, the home has been bombarded with many outside pressures during our generation. And it is also true that home often seems unprepared to cope with some pressures, thus weakening its power for good. While our concern is not to apportion blame, it is our conviction that a large number of today's problems in society can be traced back to the home. The solution to the many hurtful trends in the world today is found in stronger homes—Christian homes.

This is not to say that the home is more important than the church, for salvation is only in Christ and His church. However, what it does say is that when young people grow up in homes where there is little or no respect for religion and where evil attitudes and acts exist, the church of our Lord never gets a hearing. If Christ is to be heard, it will be because parents themselves are concerned about Him and His way of life. Then, it is likely that children will also be concerned. It is for this reason that we believe the home occupies a central and crucially important role in modern society.

## Conclusion

Many years ago, Andrew H. Blackwood wrote on "The Heritage of Our Children." He made three main points: The heritage of happy memories; good habits; and lofty ideals. Happy memories, good habits, and lofty ideals are goals toward which all of us should work toward in our homes.

Homecoming is one of life's greatest blessings. We often say, "The best part of a vacation is arriving safe at home." When a son or daughter comes home from school, it's a happy occasion. When a husband who has been away on business comes home, there is rejoicing. When a loved one who has been away in military service comes home, there is great excitement and tears of joy. But the greatest homecoming of all will be when the spirit of man returns to God who gave it. How sweet it will be to hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant ... Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:21). In order to rejoice in this greatest of all homecomings, we must accept Christ. If we obey the Gospel and become a Christian, we are a member of God's family, looking forward to that greatest of all homecomings.



- (1) Twice Peter exhorts the reader to give diligence to achieving these qualities. If we do this, what does he say the payoff will be? What warning does Peter give in verse 9 if we do not make every effort to add these qualities to our lives?
- (2) Do you feel that you have grown in your Christian maturity over the years to the point that you consistently demonstrate the qualities found in I Peter 1:5-11, or do you feel to a great degree like you have been spinning your wheels too much?
- (3) Are you ready to make a deeper commitment to adding these "Christian Graces" in your life in "increasing measure" so that you can be on the pathway to truly experiencing transformation?

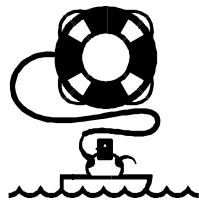
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