

Wisdom In The Home

It is no secret that there is a war on, and the battle is for marriages! The divorce rates are said to be skyrocketing and statistics reveal that Christian homes, though slightly lower, are certainly also under severe enemy fire. What is the essence of the problem, and what is the solution?

Firstly, we must realise that in our homes we are constantly dealing with close relationships. It is relatively easy to be kind and gentle with someone with whom we only have occasional contact - who knows very little about us. But in a home, our entire being is constantly exposed. Everyone in the home knows our weak point, and as soon as some strength tries to pop out like the sun on a rainy day, the clouds of past experience, quickly cover it over and blot out the struggling ray of hope. It is difficult to emerge from a mould of past failures to become a victor, and many quietly shrink back into the cesspool of resigned ineptitude. *"I guess I will never win"* they say, and their whole life is lived in the gloom of *"Nothing ever really works out for me"*.

The central core of a happy home is the ability to foster good, healthy relationships. Such relationships build whole men and women who can take the world by storm, walk with heads held high, and be winners in life. These are people who need not feel ashamed or guilty for dark areas of their lives. Shame and guilt destroy people's potential. One might say, *"Well that counts me out because I already have a string of bad experiences for which I am ashamed"* Yes, one might feel as if there is no hope. But I believe that while there is life, there is always hope. Christ died for the hopeless, that they might become whole people again. He died for me.

What are the major causes of sour relationships? Paul writes to Timothy about the typical things which we would see in the world today. In 2Tim 3:1-8 we read of difficult times which would come in the last days, and some of the reasons given here are that men would be *“lover of self, boastful, arrogant... conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lover of God,”* etc, etc. In this list I see the word *“Selfishness”* revealed again and again. Selfishness is a destroyer of relationships. Selfishness sees only my point of view. It sees and treats others as lower human beings and tends to trample others down. Selfishness breeds pride and arrogance, and enters a relationship only to get something out of it for ME. I suggest that we scrutinize our relationship - especially the difficult ones. Is there possibly a thread of selfishness which could have been a part of the problem. Be humble enough to repent and ask forgiveness from God first of all, and then also from our friend/family member. Don't leave it till tomorrow. Tomorrow may never come.

The opposite of selfishness is Love. *“Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”* 1Cor 13:4-8. This is not just a beautiful Scripture to be read at marriage ceremonies. It is truth and life. Submission to its principles gives rise to happiness and fulfilment in life. Disregard of its value can only result in dismal failure. True love, then, does not keep a record of the wrongs of others, neither does it seek its own pleasures and benefits. It is always aware of other's needs, and rather takes a back seat for the sake of others.

Paul writes about the husband's role in the home: *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself*

for her..." I see then, first of all, that a husband can only really reveal his true love for his wife by *giving himself* for her. In other words, she comes first - her needs and inner feelings. The moment selfishness for his own wants and desires start to rule the relationship, it becomes sour, and the first step towards disaster in the home has been taken. The Bible teaches that the husband is the head of the home - the leader. He is the strong one in the home. He should therefore be strong enough to humble himself and say sorry first in any disagreement which might have occurred. This does not mean that the wife is to rule the home. NO! The Scriptures teaches that she should be "*in submission*" to her husband, just as the church is subject to Christ. However, I believe that it is primarily the husband's responsibility to be the *peacemaker* in the home.

How did Jesus bring peace to our hearts? One word - Grace. He offered forgiveness when we did not deserve to be forgiven. If we then have been forgiven of so much, can we not also forgive those who have done things against us - especially those who are close to us? Why harbour things in our hearts. One might say, "*Oh but you don't know how much that person hurt me!*" Think of the cross. How much did your sin and mine hurt Jesus? "*While we were yet sinners*", the Bible says. "*Christ died for us*" (Rom 5:8) If we cannot forgive others, Jesus said, then we would also not be forgiven, and what is more, we would find ourselves in the hands of "*Tormentors*" (Mat 18:34). Is this perhaps why so many find themselves to have such complicated psychological problems?

Grace! What a lovely word. So full of compassion and understanding. So rich in kindness and patience; bursting with laughter; effervescent in its life-giving lustre. The peace it offers is like green pastures beside a gently flowing brook. And yet, its benefits can only be gained when it is given away!

Oh that such grace my soul might fill
My tongue might draw from its treasure
Till no words of selfish pride I speak
The good of others my only measure.