

CHRISTIAN HOMES NOURISH THE HEART II Timothy 1:5

INTRODUCTION:

Donald Thomas is the author of 3 books on the subjects of motivation, fitness and vegetarianism. In September of 1978, Thomas established a record, published in the Guinness Book of World Records, for preaching the world's longest sermon. Thomas preached on the subject of Divine Nutrition, developing his theory that every text in the Bible gives specific instructions on health, longevity and nutrition. Donald Thomas preached for 93 consecutive hours. That means he lacked 3 hours of preaching four days straight.

Donald Thomas' subject is similar to mine...but not the same. And I can make my point a whole lot quicker...in fact, in half the time.

From May through July, we are going to be looking at the way a proper spiritual diet nourishes us to be fit for life. This being Mothers' Day, I thought it would be good to consider how a Christian home nourishes the heart.

In 1996, Hillary Clinton stirred up a lot of controversy when she published a book with the title "It Takes a Village: And Other Lessons Children Teach Us". Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole countered, "*... with all due respect, I am here to tell you, it does not take a village to raise a child. It takes a family to raise a child.*"

Have you noticed that many parents seem to be expecting the village to raise their children? They seem to want everyone else to do for their children what they have been unwilling to do. Doesn't it seem that many parents want the school to do what they won't do...and then criticize the teachers and the administration when they do it? It would appear that some parents want the church or the youth groups to substitute for the role that God intended parents to play.

When God created man, He saw fit to bring children into families. That was His original way to raise healthy children. And it still is. Children raised in healthy Christian homes are very blessed. The young man, Timothy, was an example of one who was blessed by being raised in a healthy Christian home. The apostle Paul said of Timothy:

I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

Now, know this: a healthy Christian home nourishes the heart of everyone in the home; not just the children. Don't you know that home was a happier and healthier place place, not just for Timothy but also for his mother, Eunice and for his grandmother, Lois, because when Christ is the head of the home, everyone benefits.

In the context of a Christian family, children and adults will find:

I. **ATTENTION**

I'm sure you have heard of Attention Deficit Disorder. Often linked with hyperactivity and called by the initials ADHD, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder afflicts some 4% - 6% of the American population. We often think of ADHD as a childhood condition but 8 – 9 million adults in this country have ADHD.

In ADD or ADHD, the attention deficit that is referred to is the difficulty that some people have in staying focused; that is, in giving attention. I don't know if ADD is epidemic or not but I know of a different kind of attention deficit disorder that is. That is the attention deficit disorder caused, not by the inability to give attention but by the inability to get attention.

Children and babies have an almost insatiable need for attention. That is the way God created them. We do not spoil kids if we provide them with the attention that God created them to crave. But we can ruin them if we don't.

Here is another truth: we never outgrow our need to receive attention. Children need attention but so do men and so do women. Dads and Moms need attention and so do grandmas and grandpas. Attention validates our sense of worth. To be ignored is to be told, implicitly, that we aren't important; we don't matter; we have no value.

Spouses who do not receive attention at home are left with a hunger that makes them vulnerable to satisfy that need elsewhere. Children who do not receive attention at home are apt to act out in public, at school and other places just so they can get the attention that God created them to crave. And then when they go through puberty, youth that have been raised with an attention deficit are extremely vulnerable to predators who can sense that and who will shower them with attention so they can take advantage of them and use them for their own immoral purposes.

We will value people and give them the attention they deserve when we recognize that everyone in our home is a gift from God and a priceless treasure. We give our family members the attention they need when we remember they are fashioned in the image of God. For that reason, a Christian home ought to nourish the heart with plenty of attention for everyone in the home.

II. **ACCEPTANCE**

In Death Of The Hired Man, Robert Frost wrote, "*Home is the place where, when you have to go there, They have to take you in.*" But not all

homes are like that. Not everyone finds unconditional acceptance in the home of his family.

In the story we often call The Parable of The Prodigal Son, Jesus gave us the perfect example of unconditional acceptance. A younger son was so unappreciative of his blessings and so disrespectful of his father that he asked for his share of the family inheritance while his father was still alive. He wanted his portion of the estate so he could leave home and family behind.

His father must have recognized that forcing his son to stay home because he had no other alternative would not do the boy much good. So the boy's father gave him his share of the family's financial assets and the boy left home and went into a far country.

All too soon, the young man had burned through all of his money and was destitute. Living in Gentile country, there were hog farms and this Jewish lad eventually hired himself out to feed the pigs. For a Jew, it doesn't get any lower than that! Every day, he became spiritually unclean because of his contact with the swine.

I don't know what he was paid to feed the pigs but it wasn't enough because he had no money for food. And he was hungry. And he was desperate...so desperate that he longed to eat the pods he was feeding to the pigs.

Separated from his family, separated from his funds, separated from his friends, he came to his senses and decided to return home, beg for forgiveness and ask to work for his Dad as a servant. As long as he was going to work on a farm, it may as well be his Dad's farm because his Dad treated his servants with fairness and compassion.

So the boy started for home and while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, ran to him, embraced him and welcomed him back. The boy found acceptance...in a model of a Christian home.

Don't wait to lose your kids before you decide to give them acceptance. Kids, don't wait until you are separated from your parents before you learn to accept them for who they are. None of us are perfect and that is never more apparent than in the close quarters of living together. Home is the first best place to learn to extend the grace of accepting one another for who we are.

III. AFFECTION

We all have a hole in our soul that only love can fill. In a perfect world, our first experience of warm affection comes at the knees of loving parents.

When that is the case, we learn to trust, we learn to risk, we learn to receive and to give appropriate affection in appropriate ways. But when children do not receive warmth at home, they will certainly look for it elsewhere.

Children are created with an appetite for affection just as surely as they are created with an appetite for their mother's milk. And, again, if children do not receive affection at home, they will seek it elsewhere.

The same is true for spouses. God's word commands, "husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). The love of Christ for the church was a love that caused him to give his life for the church. That is the paradigm and the pattern for the love of a husband for his wife. Wives would do well to love their husbands in the same manner for if both do, they would always seek only the best for one another.

The best gift you can give to the members of your family (and the most Christlike) is to give them evidence of affection. Let them know you love them.

IV. AFFIRMATION

Kids also need to know they are competent. "At-a-boy" and "At-a-girl" are the words developing youth need to hear. This isn't rocket-science and it is so easy a caveman could do it. Catch your kids doing something right and then brag on them. If you do that, there is no telling what they may accomplish. A kid will move a mountain to get some praise from his parents.

And parents respond well to affirmation from their kids. Ask yourself, "When was the last time I praised members of my family for things they do and that they do well?" If you have to think very hard, it has been too long. I still like the way Johnny Mercer put it:

*You've got to accentuate the positive
Eliminate the negative
Latch on to the affirmative
Don't mess with Mister In-Between*

CONCLUSION:

Humphrey Lee reminds us of the experience of visiting a small airport and watching a light plane take off at night. Lee writes: "*As the plane heads its nose down the runway, an attendant turns a switch, and a pencil of light is thrown along the path of the plane. The plane makes its way along that thread of light until it rises gracefully from the ground and makes its way into the dark. The attendant then switches off this beam of light. He has*

done all that he could do. He has not dispelled the darkness--but he has helped the pilot off to a good start."

That is very much what mothers do...and what fathers do: they get their families off to a good start. But beyond what other mothers and fathers do, Christian parents get their children off, not just to a good start but to a God start.

The young man, Timothy, was blessed to have been raised in a home where his mother and his grandmother were people of sincere faith. Will that be said of your children and grandchildren? Children and grandchildren, can that be said of you and the way you act toward your parents, your grandparents and your brothers and sisters?

I want you to join me in prayer that God will give us homes built firm upon the Savior. Would you please stand and sing?

INVITATION: #451 – “A Christian Home” (Same tune as “Be Still, My Soul”)