

Source of Family Strength

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In the movie *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy gets back to her home state of Kansas by clicking her shoes together three times and saying, "There's no place like home. There's no place like home." Her statement is supposed to make us realize that there simply is no place as sweet and as wonderful as our own home and family. Sadly this is not the case for far too many people.

After years of misguided information by "family experts" on what a family is and how a family should operate, these same misguided experts are telling us the family is in trouble and we must do something to fix it. But what should we do? Should we listen to these same experts? There's an old saying, "Fool me once and shame on you. Fool me twice and shame on me!"

There are many books and seminars available now on how to build a solid marriage and family, but something very important is missing from many of them: a consistent dose of biblical truth mixed with God-given wisdom. David said it best many years ago:

Unless the LORD builds the house they labor in vain who build it. (Psalm 127:1 NKJV)

And then also in Psalm 128,

Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,

Who walks in His ways.

When you eat the labor of your hands,

You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine

In the very heart of your house,

Your children like olive plants

All around your table.

Behold, thus how the man shall be blessed

Who fears the Lord. (v. 1-4)

If we truly want to do more than just dream of a happy family life both in our natural families, as well as in the larger family of God, we will need to sink our teeth into the meat of God's Word. Our greatest need in every area of life, including marriage and the family, is fresh insight from the ever-relevant Word of God. In a day when countless demands and attacks are made on the family, it is essential that we hear God's voice on this matter and act accordingly.

Just before Israel was about to go into the Promised Land, Moses set before the people the foundational uniqueness of their faith, and four guiding commands that would keep their families strong. These commands will keep both the family of God and our immediate families strong and vital. The first command is for us to hear the truth continually.

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!" (Deuteronomy 6:4)

The first thing we need to do is "Hear" the Word of the Lord. And the first great truth is that our God is one. He is one in essence, in being. He is unlike any and all other supposed deities. Families are strong when they acknowledge God's presence, His uniqueness, and His right to rule over us. We must seek His will and encourage one another to remember that our God is a righteous and faithful and reliable God. This is bedrock truth to build on. The second command is to love the Lord fervently.

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." (vs. 5)

The repetition of the word "all" in this verse emphasizes total devotion. Our love for God must not be partial, or casual. It must be seen in all we say and do. Our total devotion to God should be the basis for all of our decisions and actions. It is almost impossible for us to instill into our children or other believers a principle we do not practice. Modeling the truth far outweighs preaching it any day of the week! The third command is teach diligently.

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the

way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. (v. 6, 7)

The job of training children to walk in the ways of the Lord is the responsibility of the home first and foremost. The church can help and augment, but God's desire is that there be a conscious and purposeful transfer of truth from parents to children. There are ample opportunities when you sit in your house, or walk, etc. to teach God's Word. And the same is true for the larger family of God. Mature believers should work one-on-one with new believers showing them, through personal example, how to live the Christian life. Christianity is not just a Sunday religion. It's a daily relationship with God, and each day will bring new lessons to learn. The fourth and final command is fear the Lord greatly.

"You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him...You shall not go after other gods". (13, 14)

At the heart of this command is our own well being. God knows that often our hearts are prone to wander. And we are surrounded by gods today even as Israel was. Materialism, money, the opinions of neighbors, selfishness, pride, popularity, fears, angers, and so on, are still idols we sometimes worship to our own hurt. We need to fear God! We need to have a reverence for His holy name and a deep respect for His sovereign will. Our reverent fear and obedience is a key to family strength and stability.

In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death. (Proverbs 14:26, 27)

May God bless you and your family as you do His will.