

# THE NEED FOR AN OASIS

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## WHAT IS AN OASIS?

This paper is based on a series of four messages given by Pastor George Parsons on Sunday August 30, 1987 and Wednesday, September 30, 1987. Copies of these tapes are available from the tape ministry. These messages deal with the believing parents' responsibility before God, especially with respect to older children living in the home.

An oasis is found in the midst of a dry, dull, dreary, dead and desert land. In a barren land, it is a place where water is found. It is a place of green grass and fruitful trees. It is a fertile area, a place of life. To the desert traveler the oasis is a place of welcome RELIEF. It is a marvelous thing to come upon an oasis. It is there that one finds REFRESHMENT and REVIVAL and RENEWAL and REJUVENATION and REST and RELIEF.

We live in a world that is very barren. It is very dry and dead (lacking God's life). There is a great need for an oasis. Spiritually an oasis is wherever God is. It is a place where one can find the GRACE, GOODNESS, GLORY and GREATNESS of God. It is the place where one can find FELLOWSHIP and FRIENDSHIP with God. *Your heart* can be and needs to be an oasis. *Your home* can be and needs to be an oasis. *A nation* (such as Israel) which honors the Lord can be an oasis.

## GOD'S GARDEN

The Garden of Eden was a special place where God could be found (Gen. 2:8, 15). It was the place where God would bless and benefit man. In that garden man had a great deal of liberty and freedom (Gen. 2:16) and he had great opportunity for fellowship and friendship with God. It was a very special kind of place. There were HOUSE RULES in the garden of Eden. Along with their great freedom (Gen. 2:16) they also had restriction (Gen. 2:17). God laid down the rule with great emphasis and certainty: "for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely (most certainly) die" (Gen. 2:17). Man did not make the rules, God did. The garden was meant to be a place for fellowship and friendship—God walking with man and man enjoying God (cf. Gen. 3:8).

Man violated God's HOUSE RULES and ended up in the wrong state and condition (a sinful state and condition). "Therefore the LORD God SENT HIM FORTH from the garden...He DROVE OUT the man" (Gen. 3:22-24). God in His grace drove him out and expelled him out of the garden. It was the place of fellowship and friendship, but Adam and Eve were put out! God

was in but man was out. Adam and Eve broke the HOUSE RULES and they were put out of the garden.

God gave the promise of a Saviour (Gen. 3:15) and Adam and Eve believed the promise and by means of sacrifice they were able to continue to have fellowship and friendship with God. God got Adam and Eve out of the garden. Adam and Eve got God back into their hearts by way of sacrifice and faith.

## **CAIN**

The home of Adam and Eve was an oasis. Cain did not care for the RULES OF THE HOME and he did not care for the God of the home. Since Cain was out of harmony with the rules of the home and the God of the home he had to LEAVE THE HOME. He WENT OUT (Gen. 4:16) because GOD DROVE HIM OUT (Gen. 4:14). Cain would miss out on the benefits of the home which included fellowship, friendship, security, safety, purpose, etc. Instead he started building his own city and his own civilization to try to gain and to get what he had lost, but God was not in it. Cain did not want God to be included and involved in his life so he left the house and started his own house where God was left out.

## **ABRAHAM AND HIS HOUSEHOLD**

Cain's civilization continued until the flood. The wickedness of man was great and his thoughts were evil *continually* (all the time—morning, noon and night). This godless world was judged. After the flood the sin of man expressed itself again at Babel. Once more a city and civilization was built without God and once again God brought swift judgment and scattered them (Genesis chapter 11).

From Shem's line God found Abraham (Abram) and called him out (Gen. 12:1). Abraham had to GET OUT of the land of idolatry. God would bless Abraham and God would even bless the whole world because of Abraham. God is looking for a believing heart that is in fellowship and friendship with Him. Notice what God said of Abraham in Genesis 18:18-19: "for I know that he will COMMAND his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD." God knew that Abraham would have HOUSE RULES (COMMANDS) and that he would ENFORCE them. He would have a family and he would COMMAND them. His responsibility was to RULE UNDER HIS OWN ROOF, and he did just this. Because Abraham honored God in his home God blessed Abraham and his seed (Gen. 18:19). It was his home and he was going to see to it that those under his roof at least honored God even if not saved. It was God's place. It was the place of fellowship and friendship. It was a special place where the true and living God was made known. It was an OASIS.

## THE NATION ISRAEL

Out of Abraham God raised up a special nation. Israel was called out of Egypt to honor and worship God. But there were godless people in the land of promise who because of idolatry and sin were under the judgment of God. Such people had to be DRIVEN OUT (Num. 33:51-54). The land of promise was meant to be an OASIS, a place of fellowship and friendship with God. "But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides and shall vex you in the land" (Num. 33:55). "Pricks in your eyes"—something sharp in your eye that really bothers you; "thorns in your sides"—every time you move you get pierced. The land of Israel was to be an oasis but the children of Israel needed to keep it that way or else they would be plagued by their own failure to fix the problems. The home of the believer is to be an oasis and it must be kept that way. Things need to be fixed. There must be HOUSE RULES that honor God. The house rules must be ENFORCED. Failure to do so will bring only vexation and more and more problems. God walked in the midst of Israel (Deut. 23:14 and compare Gen. 3:8) and God demanded that His territory be holy. Wherever God is, that place is HOLY GROUND. Where God is, wrong must be dealt with by confession, correction, chastisement, etc. Is God in your home? Is God honored in your home? Do those under your roof honor the Lord on the Lord's Day?

Note carefully Deuteronomy 31:11-12. All Israel was to come to hear God's law. Those living in the land of Israel were all to come to the place of worship. Men, women and CHILDREN and even foreigners who were in the area were all to come. All those who are in the territory must honor the God whose territory it is and they must get to know His rules. If a person visits a foreign country, he had better know the rules of that country. Even the stranger or foreigner was told to gather with the Israelites. This person was an adult (could be 22 years old, 82 years old, 100 years old) living in Israel's territory. God demanded that this person be present at Israel's gathering, to listen to God's Word. Why? Because God is in this land and everyone needs to know God's house rules and everyone in the land needs to honor them. Strangers came into Israel from other parts of the world, but Israel did not change the rules because these strangers had come there to live. If the stranger had come to live in Israel's territory then he had to adjust to Israel's house rules. He had to honor Israel's ways and rules and laws, and the necessity of abiding by God's rules had nothing to do with his age.

Sometimes we are told that when a person comes "of age" that he no longer needs to abide by the rules. When he is a young child he must attend church services and follow the rules, but when the time comes that he reaches a certain age, he is then old enough to make up his own mind about whether to attend church or not. He is old enough to drive a car, he is old enough to vote, he is old enough to have a full time job, he is old enough to fight for his country, so certainly he is old enough to decide for himself whether he wants to gather with the local assembly of believers. But such reasoning is defective. Being "of age" does not make a person exempt from the HOUSE RULES where one stays, and in the home of the believer these rules would include

honoring the Lord at the regular services of the assembly. Being of age does give the person the option of LEAVING the house if he is unwilling or refuses to follow the house rules. IF HE REFUSES TO HONOR GOD (where God and His Word are honored) THEN HE IS OUT OF PLACE AND MARRING THE TESTIMONY. He has no right to abandon the rules but he has every right to abandon the place where the rules are enforced, but at the same time he forfeits the benefits and blessings that come with being in a God-blessed place. But even here we must remember that it is not at the oasis but often in the dry desert that people learn of their need for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is very difficult for the parents, but sometimes having the son or daughter leave the home is something that God can use in eventually bringing the young person home to Himself. It is painful to have to bid farewell to a young person who is going in the wrong direction. Tough love is never easy. We wish such young people could learn the easy way, but often they, like us, must learn the hard way.

The nation Israel was told that they must COMMAND their children (Deut. 32:46). Parents have every right to COMMAND their children. In fact, it is more than a right, it is their DUTY. "For it is not a vain thing for you; because IT IS YOUR LIFE (a relationship to God which involves fellowship and friendship)" (Deut. 32:47). "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother...that it may be well with thee" (Eph. 6:1-3). WHERE ARE YOU TRYING TO FIND YOUR LIFE? WHAT, WHO IS GOVERNING YOUR TRIP THROUGH TIME?

God is present everywhere (omnipresent). He is right there to reach everyone in the world (see Acts 17:27). His Word is near and accessible (see Rom. 10:8). God is present everywhere but the personal exercise of God is something else. God has a special way of making Himself known. He did this with the nation of Israel. He demanded their attention because He was among them. God separated them from other people (Lev. 20:24-25). Why? That they might be HIS in a special way for FELLOWSHIP and for FRIENDSHIP (Lev. 20:26), that they might realize the power, presence and purpose of God. It was a marvelous relationship!

## SOLOMON

Israel had a unique relationship with God. They were a set apart people. God's people must honor God and abide by His rules. Why must this be done? "That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else" (1 Kings 8:57-60). The Israelites, as indicated in Solomon's prayer, were to have such a relationship to God that God was God to them in a very real and wonderful way. The purpose behind this was not just for Israel but that all the world might know that they could have such a relationship as well. *Application:* God is to be so known in your home in such a way that a person cannot go into your home and not know that God is there. There is something very special and different about a heart that honors God. There is something very special and different about a home that honors God. There is something very special and different about a church that honors God (1 Cor. 14:24-25). There is something very special and different about a nation that honors the Lord: "Blessed is the nation whose God

is the LORD" (Psalm 33:12). Is this God the LORD of your heart and the LORD of your home?

## **ELIJAH**

Elijah challenged the people, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). The word "HALT" means "limp, hop about with an unsteady gait as a lame man would move." It is used of a person being double minded, saying YES to God and then NO to God, being two sided, two-minded, indecision. Elijah was telling the people that they must make a decision. You can't have God in the living room and Baal in the basement. You can't have God at family altar and Baal later on that evening. You must be CONSISTENT. Either be an out and out HEATHEN or be an out and out BELIEVER. *Application*: Who is your family going to follow? Who is going to be LORD over your home? Whose rules shall you follow? This principle is also illustrated by the familiar verse found in 2 Chronicles 7:14. God was saying (paraphrasing): "If my people stay in the right place and honor Me in their heart and in their home and in their nation, then they will be blessed. If not, then those things that they do honor will harass and haunt and hurt them all the days of their life."

Note 2 Chronicles 7:14. God is interested in what our heart says to Him. He wants to know where He fits in to our heart, our home and our nation. Where does He fit in? In the closet? In the kitchen? Does He have access to every room of our life including the basement and attic? See the helpful booklet, *My Heart, Christ's Home*.

## **TWO DIFFERENT KINGS**

In 2 Chronicles 33 we learn about King Manasseh the supreme corrupter of Israel. He ruled 55 long years. It was a wretched reign but the people loved it so. This man brought in every idol imaginable (verses 3-6). But In 2 Chronicles 34 we learn of his grandson Josiah. What a contrast! He went from idol to idol destroying them all! He determined that his kingdom would honor God and the nation was blessed by God because of this. We should note that the king was the leader of the nation and he was the man who was responsible before God. He was responsible to have a right heart before the KING OF KINGS, honoring the KING'S rules and enforcing them. *Application*: When God is not honored in the home the parents are at fault. Do not blame the children. The parents should have the control and they are responsible before God .

## **THE GREATEST KING**

Zechariah chapter 14 describes millennial conditions. The Lord Jesus Christ will rule the entire earth. In that day those under His rule must obey the kingdom laws! All must obey His

**KINGDOM RULES.** This does not mean that everyone will be saved. He will still have enemies, but they will submit to the king and yield to Him with feigned obedience (Psalm 66:3). The King will *not*: say, "Since you are unsaved I do not expect you to abide by My laws." No, everyone in the King's territory (the whole earth) must abide by His rules.

A specific example of this is given in Zechariah 14:16. All must come to Jerusalem to keep the feast of tabernacles. Those who fail to do this will be judged either by no rain or by the plague. The rules are right and the rules are strictly enforced. If you don't come, you are in trouble. Those in the King's territory must obey the King's rules.

*Application:* Those under the roof must come and obey the **HOUSE RULES**, and what kind of a believer's house is it that does not have church attendance as a rule? Any family that honors God is a family that honors the Lord's Day and does not forsake the assembling of the saints (Hebrews 10:25). The parents that do not require attendance at the regular services of the assembly on the part of the children are saying this: "It is important for us but we do not consider it important for you. We will do our thing and you can do your thing. Knowing Christ as one's Saviour and Lord and being thus in His Body is not all-important to us. In our home you can decide whether or not you go to church. We will not demand this of you. You are old enough to make up your own mind. We hope you will decide to go, but if not, that's alright." God forbid that we should think this way. What message would this be giving to the younger children in the home? What message would this be giving to the neighbors who would notice if not everyone goes to church on Sunday? What message would this be giving to other families in the local assembly and to other young people who are looking for an excuse to avoid dealing with God?

Our message to our young people needs to be strong and clear. They need to know that in this home there is nothing that is more important than honoring God. This is not an option but it is a requirement for everyone in the house. As parents we need to represent and point clearly to the living God. Our message to the young people is this: "If you leave Jesus Christ out of your life you are damned and doomed!" This is the truth, and we must speak the truth and we must speak the truth in love. Are we really concerned for our children? There is something that they need far more than a roof over their head, a bed to sleep on and food to eat. What they really need is the salvation of their soul, and only God can bring this about and God is not pleased when we **COMPROMISE IN THE HOME**. We must **NOT** compromise **THE HOLY STANDARDS OF GOD**. Are you letting **GOD BE GOD** in your home?

Let us be a good example for others so that they might get the right message concerning what God's Word teaches. Keep in mind that we would not want our fellow believers setting the wrong example for our family and those before whom we live. When we fail to set the right example this causes difficulties. We would not want to explain our wrong thinking and thus our wrong practice to others who are trying to do right. It is much easier to enlist others to approve our practice who are moving and thinking wrongly as we are. It is much harder to explain and to **ENFORCE RIGHT ACTION** when and as we are doing wrong. We would not want (or would we?) the local church to do as we do or think as we think, etc. How safe would we really be with God? How close would such thinking get us to God? How many would be really convicted of

their sin and be saved? How much would they honor God's Word?

## **FIX THE PROBLEM**

Parents are responsible for godly parental modeling. The prerequisite to such is personal devotion, loyalty and love to God (Deut. 6:5 and the following verses). The home is to be parent centered not child centered. The home does not revolve around the children, their desires and activities, etc. It is to revolve around God and His Word and finds its expression in the marriage relationship which lasts one's *lifetime*. The children usually, normally grow up and leave at some point.

Parents ought to lay the ground work and ground rules before the teenagers become teenagers. They should be taught the HOUSE RULES while they are very young.

The church ought to be pointing parents to keep on growing and knowing, to be stronger as persons and in their marriages for Christ's sake. Parents, persons ought to be able to handle and hold guidelines for their own hearts, their own homes.

Many of our problems are of our own making. They are caused by our own neglect and failure to be responsible. Sometimes a problem can go away but it is not because the problem was resolved in the right way. *The battle was not fought and the victory was not won*. The parents did not do what was right at all. Instead by the sheer passing of time events and circumstances changed and the problem was gone. What message or testimony do we then have? How shall we help and give hope to others to rightly advance?

For example, a 22 year old son runs into some problems and needs a place to stay. The parents are concerned and want to help and open their home. The son has no interest whatsoever in attending services at the local assembly and the parents do not require this at all. Reasonable and right HOUSE RULES are not made, or they are not enforced. The parents allow this situation to continue and nothing is fixed. Time passes. Finally after several months the son finds a "better" place to live and moves in with friends. The problem has gone away. The son is no longer there. But the problem was never resolved and there was no victory. Circumstances just happened to change. It is like the man who commits adultery again and again with another woman. One day the woman dies and obviously he does not commit adultery with her any more. He never fixed the problem. Circumstances changed things but nothing was ever rightly fixed. One's heart has not increased in its knowledge of God. It is only a matter of time until the problem shows up again in one way or another.

So it is with the parents in our example. They gained no victory and they have no testimony to give. It is only a matter of time and the problem will show up in one way or another. The problem is still there even though it is not expressing itself outwardly at the present time. There is no oasis in such a home. There is no clear message to saints or sinners.

We exert an influence in our home in many areas. We exert an influence over the flowers in our home. We exert an influence over the pets in our home. We exert an influence over the automobile in our garage and we demand that it be maintained in a certain way, etc. Why don't we exert an influence over our children in a right and healthy way?

Do not the unsaved nations, parents, employers, schools, colleges etc, show concern and exercise their authority over certain acts and actions which reflect back on them in a way that they consider hurtful, harmful, etc.? In fact, they will not allow or tolerate such without some action being taken to correct the situation.

Schools set standards and rules and can enforce them: "The federal courts have held that schools can regulate grooming if they can demonstrate that neatness furthers a reasonable educational purpose. Other federal courts have said that schools are free to regulate hairstyles and attire without giving any justification" (*Everyday Law*, Sept. 1988, p.19).

Parents set standards high or low or whatever, but do not normally encourage wrong doing, rape, robbery, etc. But more often than not we fail to teach and we fail to enforce good standards, especially in the light of God's Word. We tolerate and allow something less than the best in our homes. The standard has been lowered.

Young people that are on and into drugs, etc. in the home have a haven that harbors and helps their cause. The association is made by the public that such parents are in agreement with what their young people or older people are doing. Brethren, these things ought not to be so!

The believer's *heart*, *home* and local church ought to be set apart places under the governing guidelines of God's Word. God's HOLY PERSON and PRESENCE makes for HOLY places, persons, things (Exodus 3:1-5; Zech. 14:20-21; etc.). *GOD'S NAME* is on the line in your *heart*, *home* and *church* if you are a believer indeed.

## **THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT**

Children are commanded to HONOR: their parents (Exodus 20:12; and compare Eph. 6:1-3). The word "honor" means "regard, treat as being worthy of honor." It is the opposite of making light of someone, considering someone of little importance, or despising someone. Parents are intended by God to be the BRIDGE between children and God. It is through the parents that children have an opportunity to gain a concept of God and make contact with God. Parents are given delegated authority to govern and to guide the children. God has given this responsibility to the parents. Never forget that your children are NOT YOUR OWN. You do not own your children. The relationship that you have to your children is temporary, not eternal. In all areas the parents need to be pointing CLEARLY and CONSISTENTLY to God (cf. Deut. 6:4-9, 20-25).

Do NOT seek to be the base, ground or foundation for your children. You CANNOT be the foundation upon which they rest. You are NOT the basis of their existence...GOD IS! If *you* are



trying to hold them, your hands will weaken and falter. Deposit them in God's hands (please refer to the tapes of Pastor Parsons' Prayer Meeting messages on 8/24/88 and 8/31/88 and 9/7/88 based on 2 Timothy 1:12; these messages are available upon request from the tape ministry). Don't hang on to your children in the wrong way. Your children are not and must not be the basis of a meaningful existence for you. What happens if they are taken away in death? Does life's meaning and the basis for your existence end? In Philippians 1:21 it does NOT say, "For to me to live is MY CHILDREN." Let us not give our children the place that only Christ should have and must have. Also it is not what *you* want for their life but what *God* wants that really counts.

In the home the children must learn to honor the parents because this is how they learn to honor God. The parents must honor God. As Charles Bridges has said, the parent "cannot convey grace to his children (he cannot save their souls), but at least he can ENFORCE RESTRAINT, and acquit himself of the guilt of 'honoring his sons before God'" (*The Christian Ministry*, p. 166).

## **JOSHUA**

The people in Joshua's day needed to PUT AWAY what was evil and wrong in their hearts, in their homes and in their nation (see Joshua 24:14). In Joshua 24:15 Joshua tells the people not to be indecisive. They must choose! Joshua's personal choice was already FIRMLY MADE: "but as for me AND MY HOUSE, WE will serve the Lord." Not only would he serve the Lord but he would see to it that his house also served the Lord. He was responsible for his own roof and also for the people under his roof. He was responsible before God. He was responsible to see that those under his roof honored and served the Lord.

Notice the people's response in Joshua 24:16-18. It sounded very good ("we will serve the Lord") but Joshua said, "Ye cannot serve the LORD: for He is an holy God" (v. 19). They said, "WE WILL" and he said "YOU CAN'T"! Why not? What's wrong? Did they not have good intentions? They had a wrong attitude and they were still related to idols. They were making a verbal commitment to God but their heart was not right. Our service to God must be WITH ALL OUR HEART! (see Deut. 10:12).

## **A TRUE DISCIPLE**

"If any man come to Me and HATE NOT his father, and mother, and wife and CHILDREN, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, HE CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE" (Luke 14:26). Joshua had said, "You cannot serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:19). The Lord Jesus said, "You cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). The Lord Jesus must be at the very center of our lives. Our LOVE for Him must be so great that our love for anything else or anyone else is as HATRED in comparison. God must be at the CENTER. He must not be as a spoke of the wheel but the very hub of the wheel. You cannot have your wife, husband, children or SELF at the center. No one

else and nothing else must take HIS place. Jesus Christ cannot be replaced by anyone or anything. "For to me to live is \_\_\_\_\_ (Phil. 1:21—and don't replace Him with anyone or anything else). The believer must live in such a way by actions and speech that he is ever pointing to God who is the center. The claims of all others must yield their place to God's claims. God has *first claim* upon me. Everything else and everyone else must YIELD to God.

"It is required of a steward that a man be found FAITHFUL" (1 Cor. 4:2). Believing parents have a stewardship from God and God requires faithfulness. Faithful parents must see to it that their children are likewise faithful (see Titus 1:6 where "believing" can be translated "faithful"). You can count on these children staying in line, not being unruly, being in church, being ruled well (1 Tim. 3:4-5), etc.

How important is the local assembly of believers? The parent communicates the importance or non-importance of the assembly to the children in many ways. Nothing is more important than being a believer and being part of the Body of Christ and enjoying the LIFE I have in Christ here and now for the glory of God. The supreme importance of this shows up weekly and is picked up by those around me for good or for bad. One's struggles and strife concerning the church are increased by one's failure to be having a right attitude and approach towards God and His Church. The very way we dress for worship says something. Whether or not we are constantly looking at our watch toward the end of the service says something. Do we really see the greatness of the assembly as God sees it (see 1 Timothy 3:15)?

## **THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING IN A BELIEVING HOME**

When both parents are professing believers it is reasonable and right to expect God's Word to be operational in such a home. Each one needs to be letting God's Word instruct and direct their actions. On a given issue or item they can find a united heart to be able to speak and to stand TOGETHER—both parents in AGREEMENT, saying YES or saying NO as needed in light of God's Word.

When one of the parents is *not* trusting Christ this can make for problems and for division—with one parent saying YES and the other parent saying NO on a given issue.

The parent who is trusting Christ must do what is right. The other parent really knows you are right even when he or she is wrong. Let the person who is not with it catch up and see the need for right thinking, right decisions, right action, etc. The failure of one need not be the failure of the other. The real problem too often is on the part of the believing parent. We are to follow God's Word, not the highs and lows or our own soul or of those around us. We are of no real help if we submit to their ups and downs, and if we make their thinking and acting our standard in place of God's Word.

The presence of a true believer in the home makes a big difference (see 1 Cor. 7:14). The unbelieving spouse is set apart in a special way because of the presence of a believer who is

rightly connected to Jesus Christ. When Christ is at home in a believer's heart the entire household benefits. Even the children are "holy" or SET APART, under the influence of God in a very special way. They have the benefit and privilege of being raised in God's kind of a place, even if only one parent is a solid believer. In Israel every stranger in the land was brought under the blessing and privilege of God because of their association with God's people. Today every unsaved person in the home is brought under the blessing and privilege of God because of their close association with a true child of God.

"If the unbelieving depart, LET HIM DEPART" (I Cor. 7:15). The unbelieving partner may say, "I don't want to live with this believer any longer. Our way of life and style of life are completely different and I want to get out of this marriage." He or she has this option. The believer cannot stop being a believer and cannot stop honoring the Lord, but the unbeliever can decide to leave the home. The same would apply to children when they are old enough. If they do not wish to remain in a godly environment, if they do not like the house rules, if they have no interest in attending the assembly, etc., then THEY MAY DEPART. We must not change the rules to accommodate them. We must not compromise our God-honoring standards. By God's grace we must hold the line.

Of course this does not apply to younger children. If a seven year old says, "I don't like going to church and I refuse to go any more!", then what should the parents do? First of all, it is the parents that make the rules not the children. Too many homes today are run by the children who always get their way for their own harm and for their parents' shame. Secondly, their likes or dislikes are not the issue. Young children may not like school or they may not like to visit the doctor, but we make them go because we know what is best for them. We don't give them an option. We want God's highest and best for them whether they like it or not.

## **AN OASIS, BUT NOT A HAVEN**

The Christian home is to be an oasis—a special place where the grace, goodness, glory and greatness of God is found. The Christian home must not be a haven or a hideout for a young person who is living a life-style contrary to the moral principles of God's Word. The home is not to be a sanctuary where we sanction drugs, drinking, sexual immorality or any other kind of foul practice. The home which is to honor God must not be a shelter or haven for practices or life-styles which greatly dishonor God. When a young person wishes to live at home it must be on the parents' terms, not on the young person's terms. We must not allow them to destroy the oasis and the testimony of the home.

When a young person has been away from home and then wants to come back and live in the home once again, this is the ideal time for the parents to very clearly and forcefully explain what the terms will be. Don't hastily let them come in without first carefully and thoroughly explaining the rules and regulations and what is expected and required, including such things as local church attendance. The young person's choice to move back into the home also involves

that person's knowledgeable choice to agree to and abide by all the rules of that God-honoring home. It is a cheap price to pay for all the benefits of the home—physical, mental, spiritual, etc.

## **NEGATIVE EXAMPLES**

The sin of Achan is set forth in Joshua chapter 7. It is sobering to remember that although Achan was the one who sinned, his whole house died, children included. Achan failed in his God-given responsibility and the whole household paid a price. God counted his whole house as having failed and judged them all. The head of the home is responsible for his house.

Eli's sons were the "sons of Belial" or worthless sons (1 Sam. 2:12). Eli did not like what they were doing but he allowed them to continue doing wrong. He did not fix the problem (1 Sam. 2:22-25). Here was a father who honored his sons more than he honored God (1 Sam. 2:28-29). His sons were calling the shots. Eli was more devoted to his sons than to his God. God must be honored more than anything or anyone else (see 1 Sam. 2:30). Our *first* devotion is not to our children or our marriage partner but to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **THE NEW YOU**

The lines, limits which are made by governments, employers, sports teams, school boards, parents, etc, vary and are different depending on many factors. One's mental approach to morals and mores guides what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, tolerated and not tolerated.

Societies have mores and standards that differ. What is acceptable in IRAN or in RUSSIA etc, is not acceptable here in the USA. What is acceptable here is not always acceptable elsewhere.

People change for the better or for the worse and thus so do the boundaries and limits of what is allowable within their domain. Drugs, drink, sex, etc. are wrong but time passes and they may become acceptable. Drugs, drink, sex, etc. are wrong for the five year old but okay for the 15 year old. Drugs, drink, sex, etc. are wrong for you but okay for me. Everyone does what is right in their own eyes.

When one goes to a new society he must adjust to the new lines, limits, standards in order to reasonably survive, succeed. How much more when a person gets saved and is placed into the KINGDOM OF GOD, becomes a CITIZEN OF HEAVEN an AMBASSADOR FOR CHRIST—a NEW CREATURE. There are now new standards, lines and limits based on God's infallible Word. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. 6:15). The need is to renew the NEW YOU, even by allowing the Lord Jesus Christ to be Resident and President in one's heart and in one's home.

## **GOD'S RULE IN MY HEART AND IN MY HOME**

Not only the elder but every believing father must rule his own house well (1 Tim. 3:4-5). He must rule and govern and preside and be responsible. He must take care of his own heart and take care of his own house. If he fails to rule his own house well then he is disqualified from any kind of leadership in the assembly, because if he cannot take care of his own family how can he be an example and a help to all the other families in the assembly (1 Tim. 3:5)? How can he tell others to fix their problems in the right way if he is not fixing his own problems?

Your job is not to save the home. God must do the saving. Your job is to guard the territory and maintain the place where God can exercise Himself to bless, to benefit, to be gracious and merciful. Your job is to make sure the home stays an OASIS. You cannot convert the children. That is God's job. Your job is to so honor the Lord and to be so delighted and excited about Christ that all who are under your influence will know that "God is in this place." Are you willing to fix that which is wrong in your heart so that you might have God's blessing and benefit? ***Your heart needs to be an oasis!*** Are you willing to fix that which is wrong in your home that you might have God's blessing and benefit? Your home needs to be an oasis!

Let God be loving to and through your believing heart. Don't be a coward, don't compromise. Don't be afraid to take God's side of every issue. Go after God's will for yourself and for others. This starts with the understanding that God has the authority, the right and the might to rule as THE CREATOR and THE SAVIOUR of the world. Don't be apologizing for God. Don't be making excuses for others. Don't be encouraging their excuses.

Let us make sure that we are staying spiritually right, straight, healthy, strong. Let us be letting the ages and the stages and the rages, etc. be pressing us onward and upward into God's all-powerful, all peaceful Person. (Phil. 4:6, 7, 13)

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