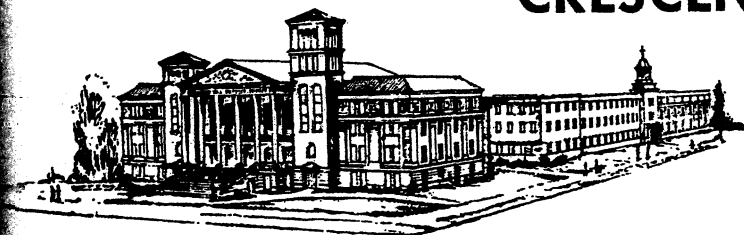


CRESCENT HILL BAPTIST CHURCH

SERMONS

"THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY"



Wednesday Evening, May 3, 1961
Crescent Hill Baptist Church
Louisville, Kentucky
John R. Claypool

The present battle between East and West is being fought in many well-known areas - science, economics, political ideology. Perhaps you did not know that the home is also a crucial battleground. At no point is the drastic difference between the two approaches more clearly seen than right here.

The Communists have openly shifted the center of cultural life from the home to the state. The parents are no longer given the responsibility of raising their children. They give birth to them and provide physical care, but the State assumes the responsibility of shaping their lives. This approach serves the Communist goal in two ways. It releases the women from the confinement of the home, and thus doubles the labor force. It also enables the State to mold the thinking of the youth and produce willing organs of the State. Thus, the Communists break all ties with their cultural past, and carry the collectivist approach over as a substitute for the home.

This whole idea is so foreign to our ideal that it is utterly repulsive. We participate in the Judaic-Christian tradition, which has always exalted the home as the basic unit of society. The ideal is this: a man and woman choose each other and unite themselves in a unique relationship. As an expression of responsible love, new life comes into the world. The parents then use their natural love and the wisdom they have gained to introduce their child to life. They care for him and impart to him an understanding of human existence. The task of training and developing the child has always been delegated to those who were responsible for his existence. The home is a place of understanding and support, where a child can mature into a secure, constructive individual. There is no way to estimate the religious and social influence that has emanated from Christian homes.

Here, then, are two drastically different understandings of the home. One is only for production of human life; the other has the total task of character development. In the context, I find myself totally repelled by one and attracted by the other.

And yet, as I analyze my own situation and observe what is happening about me, I have a grave concern. I am afraid that today we are drifting unconsciously into the very pattern that the Communists advocate. At this point, I cease to be a preacher pointing to others' faults and become a husband and a father who faces the very same pressures. It appears to me that the center of our lives is shifting more and more outside our homes, which is exactly the Communist ideal. Today, we are in the paradoxical position of building finer and finer houses, and spending less and less time within them.

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Let us look honestly at the forces in contemporary America that pull us away from a strong home. One is the desire for business and financial success that keeps the father away virtually all the time. The modern executive is caught in an all-consuming web. If he is to advance, he must not refuse to do what he is told. He must join professional and civic clubs, must play golf and entertain clients; in short, must "give his all" to attain the symbol of "success" that has become a modern "god." A friend of mine told of a layman's revival in his church. One of the speakers was a most prominent business and civic leader of the city. My friend said his talk was one of the most moving he had ever heard, for the man spoke to this very problem. He told of being at home one evening and putting his little girl to bed. She was so overjoyed to have her daddy at home, and asked him, "What are you going to be doing tomorrow night?" He said: "Nothing, darling, I'll be right here with you." And she clapped her little hands and said: "Oh, Daddy, just think - two nights in a row." My friend reported that you could have cut the silence with a knife; the experience was too familiar for comfort. This is one disruptive force - the enslavement to success.

Another is the involvement of the modern mother. Many of them work, for various reasons, and many have become immeshed in a social and civic pattern that is almost as all-consuming as the modern corporation. As a result, the major relationships to the child are assumed by an older relative or paid worker - and personality patterns are thus molded.

Then, too, there is the ever increasing agenda of activities of the school and social groups. Dancing lessons, music lessons, discussion groups, and on and on the list goes. Many a parent tells me how his child stays worn out all the time and never enjoys anything to the fullest, because the pace is just too fast.

And in listing these outside forces, it is only fair to mention the church. We have followed the trend and developed a massive program that I am quite fearful is destructive to some homes. A good deacon in Decatur once said to me: "The greatest enemy of my home is not the tavern down on the corner or the pool hall, but our over-organized church."

What does all of this add up to? Our life has moved from the home to outside values. There is nothing sinister or premeditated here - just an unconscious drifting. Yet the destination is the same, whether we intend it or not.

What can we do about it? There are no easy or set answers. Each situation is different. But it does call for an "agonizing reappraisal" of the values to which we are giving ourselves. In every case I mention, the causes in themselves are worthwhile. It is the age-old problem of the good being the enemy of the best. Realizing this, I think we are going to have to sit down and prune some of our worthwhile activities in the name of higher priority. It may mean getting out of a club, dropping a responsibility; may even mean fewer church meetings. The only way out is to wake up to what is happening. Also, we need to give more creative imagination to family life. Just spending time together is not enough. We must give some of our freshest energies and thoughts to developing this relationship.

No one person can supply all the answers, but the first step toward a solution is recognizing the problem. This, I hope, we have done tonight, and I pledge to you my sensitive concern as together we seek to make our homes what God intends for them to be.