

JUNE 2007—*Creating Christian Family*

Having a godly family is (or should be) the goal of every Christian couple. However, this is neither a simple nor an easy goal to achieve. C.S. Lewis gives some wise, much-needed advice to all who desire a godly family life.

If Christian teachers wish to recall Christian people to domesticity—and I, for one, believe that people must be recalled to it—the first necessity is to stop telling lies about home life and to substitute realistic teaching. Perhaps the fundamental principles would be something like this.

1. Since the Fall no organization or way of life whatever has a natural tendency to go right... The family, like the nation, can be offered to God, can be converted and redeemed, and will then become the channel of particular blessings and graces. But, like everything else that is human, it needs redemption. Unredeemed, it will produce only particular temptations, corruptions, and miseries. Charity begins at home: so does uncharity.
2. By the conversion or sanctification of family life we must be careful to mean something more than the preservation of “love” in the sense of natural affection. Love (in that sense) is not enough. Affection, as distinct from charity, is not a cause of lasting happiness. Left to its natural bent affection becomes in the end greedy, naggingly solicitous, jealous, exacting, timorous. It suffers agony when its object is absent—but is not repaid by any long enjoyment when the object is present... The greed to be loved is a fearful thing...
3. We must realize the yawning pitfall in that very characteristic of home life which is so often glibly paraded as its principal attraction. “It is there that we appear as we really are: it is there that we can fling aside the disguises and be ourselves.”...In fact, [such a person] values home as the place where he can “be himself” in the sense of trampling on all the restraints which civilized humanity has found indispensable for tolerable social intercourse. And this, I think, is very common. What chiefly distinguishes domestic from public conversation is surely very often simply its downright rudeness. What distinguishes domestic behavior is often its selfishness, slovenliness, incivility—even brutality...
4. How, then, *are* people to behave at home? If a man can’t be comfortable and unguarded, can’t take his ease and “be himself” in his own house, where can he? That is, I confess, the trouble. The answer is an alarming one. There is *nowhere* this side of heaven where one can safely lay the reins on the horse’s neck. It will never be lawful simply to “be ourselves” until “ourselves” have become sons of God...
5. Finally, must we not teach that if the home is to be a means of grace it must be a place of *rules*? There cannot be a common life without a *regula*. The alternative to rule is not freedom but the unconstitutional (and often unconscious) tyranny of the most selfish member.

...Must we not abandon sentimental eulogies and begin to give practical advice on the high, hard, lovely, and adventurous art of really creating the Christian family?¹

“Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”

PSALM 127:1A (ESV)

¹C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, Co., 1970), pp. 284-286.