

"When the results of life are all gathered up it will probably be seen that the things which have made the deepest and most lasting impressions in our homes and upon our children have not been the things we did with purpose and intention, planning to produce a certain effect, but the things we did when we were not thinking of training or influencing or affecting any other life."
J.R. Miller

Modern families are in disarray. Even Christian households are increasingly chaotic; rushing to and fro from extra curricular activities that mom scarcely has time to focus on the important things. And this is if the mother does not go off to work in the morning to help with the needed / desired finances. Perhaps what constitutes a family, and its greater purpose in the Christian community, needs to be considered again and perhaps families would benefit by understanding their individual roles within the family. God intends for each member in the family to play an important role in family life, the ultimate goal of which is the transformation of the individual, the home, and the society for the glory of God.

For the mother / wife, it bears remembering that faithfulness to her calling is the first essential element to success. Her husband must have full confidence in her at all times. She is able to set the tone of the entire household. If the mother's disposition is cheerful, the children will be so as well. If she views work as a burden, her children will too. Children thrive in an atmosphere of gladness. It is easy for busy moms to wish for the time to accomplish things they deem more noble than nappies, cooking, dishes, settling disputes and running a taxi service. But a wife's first work and indeed her main orientation should be her home and the wellbeing of all therein. Even volunteering for service such as teaching Sunday school, volunteer work or Ladies Bible studies should only be ventured into with caution, and should never replace the duties in the home. It is easy to get swallowed up with responsibilities outside of the home and to lose sight of the beauty in family life.

Husbands are to love their wives, just as Christ loves the church. It is a solemn thing for any man to take on the responsibilities of a wife and family and his sacrifices should be wholehearted. Often worries at the workplace or selfish habits take over and the children bear

the brunt of this neglect and preoccupation. Fathers are to train their children in all ways and to set an example in faith and conduct. Fathers should be jealous of their families and their best interests. The sacrifices required of a husband / father are laid out clearly in Scripture and anything that does not produce lasting fruit within the family should be rejected.

Brothers and sisters need to be trained at an early age to love and respect one another. This starts with respect for private property. The socialist idea that all toys are to be shared by all siblings is not reasonable and causes strife and bitterness at a young age. Life does not have all things in common, so why should we force that on children? Brothers and sisters that are taught from a young age to co-exist in harmony, where friendships can thrive, end up cultivating strong homes. In our busy lives it is easy to come and go day after day, year after year, but never forming close friendships with our brothers and sisters. Conversation amongst our children should be mutually beneficial and selfless. We need to train our children to treat members of their own families with the deepest of affection. Friends may come and go, but families are for life. In an age where peer pressure is a harsh reality, our families need to be a safe haven for our children. Not just because mother and father make it so, but also because the lasting friendships formed amongst siblings are precious.

Brothers should protect their sisters and should be available to offer advice or counsel when needed. The ability to confide in a sister or brother is a rare thing in families these days, when relationships outside of the home are too often valued above the ones in the home. We live in a culture that is convinced that social skills can only be taught in the schools or in the youth groups at church, and yet, it is in the safety of our home that social skills should be taught, practiced and perfected.

It is easy within the busy-ness of a family to frequently feel like you need some 'you time'. The idea fostered here is that your deepest longings can only be fulfilled by pursuing outside interests. But our family should be our utmost focus, especially while the children are in the

home. All things come in seasons, and the awesome task of raising a family is all-important, but over in a few short years. We do well to invest in this joyous task with a cheerful disposition, knowing full well that God our Father will provide the grace and strength we need.

The family unit is the basic building block in any society. The turmoil and godlessness we see all around us can be traced back to dysfunctional family units. If we are to reclaim our nation for Christ, surely this task needs to begin within the family unit. Strong, God fearing families that are taught to unselfishly serve one another and their community will be the firm foundation of a nation that fears God.

What will the results then be, that are gathered up at the end of our life? Will we have raised sons and daughters eager to serve God in the workplace, the home, in society or in the mission field? Or will we have contributed to the problems in our nation? We can add to the chaos, or we can help to restore. May God give us the grace and diligence daily to reclaim our families for Himself.

Lenora Hammond is a home schooling mother of four children.

Recommended further reading:

Home Making, by J.R. Miller

The Shaping of a Christian Family, by Elisabeth Elliot

The Fruit of Her Hands, by Nancy Wilson