## Godly Families

by Donnie Rader

Surely it is the dream of every Christian to have a godly family. We want that in the family we grow up in. We want that in our own family (that may yet be in the future). We want that for our children and grandchildren. Yet, not all Christians have godly families. We all know of families that we think of as being godly families. Think for a moment about some family you know that fits that bill. You, no doubt, are thinking of a family that is faithful to the Lord in all respects. You are thinking about a home that has a great and solid marriage. This family had done well in the raising of their children. Such a family would be a great example for others to imitate and follow.

Godliness is from the word eusebeia, which Vine says is "from eu, 'well,' and sebomai, 'to be devout,' denotes that piety which, characterized by a Godward attitude, does that which is well-pleasing to Him." Another word translated godliness is theosebeia "denotes 'the fear or reverence of God,' from theos, 'god,' and sebomai..." (Vine). Thus, a godly family is a family that is well devoted to and well pleasing to the Lord.

Godly families begin with the individuals within the family (2 Pet. 3:11).Let's consider some characteristics of godly families.

#### An Atmosphere of the Fear of God

Godly families live in an atmosphere of fearing God Almighty (Psa. 34). That fear will manifest itself in several ways:

1. Parents will fear God and teach their children to fear God. To be a great family parents must stand in awe of God's greatness as Jonah and Nehemiah did (Jonah 1:9; Neh. 1:5; 4:14). They must also be afraid of displeasing God (1 Sam. 11:7). Fearing God means these parents are set to do what God says without question and doubt (Deut. 13:4; Gen. 22:12). Fear causes parents to be devoted and dedicated to the Lord (Deut. 10:12, 20). Then, God fearing parents diligently teach their children to fear God as well (Deut. 14:23).

2. The emphasis will be on spiritual matters. With the fear of God in the home, spiritual concerns will be the top priority. Peter addressed both the husband and the wife in 1 Peter 3:1-7 showing that all should be focus most on spiritual matters. The wife is one who fears and trust in God (vv. 2, 5). Her concern is for her husband's soul (vv. 1-2). She is pure in her conduct (v. 2). Her focus is on the inward and not the outward person (vv. 3-6). She submits to her husband because of her fear of God (vv. 1, 6). The husband treats his wife as he should for he is concerned about hindrances to his prayers (v. 7).

3. Recognize that the family is designed and directed by God. Those who fear God know that God created the home and respect it as a divine organization (Gen. 2:18-25). Marriage is thus viewed as a good thing and not to be dreaded (cf. Prov. 18:22). But equally important is the understanding of the fact that the home is to be directed by God (cf. Prov. 2:17; Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Pet. 3:1-7). God knows what is best for the family. His word must be the standard and not modern counselors, talk shows, other families or popular magazine articles.

#### An Environment of Respect for Others

It is true that godly families need to have respect for those outside the family, but I'm more concerned here with their respect and concern for each other.

1. Each member learns to deny himself. Jesus said, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34). How much better would the family relationship be if the husband, wife and children all learned to say no to their own desires and wishes in interest of others? I can't think of a marriage problem that is not due to a lack of self denial on the part of one or both of marriage partners. Whether it is fussing and nagging, one spending all the money on self, laziness, fornication or even spouse abuse, it is because someone is not denying himself. A godly family is one that has self control.

2. They treat others the way they want to be treated. Perhaps we don't think of the golden rule (Matt. 7:12) as applying to the home and family as much as we should. Shouldn't we start using that rule with the family first? What if the husband treated his wife the way he would want to be treated if he were a woman. And, what if the wife treated her husband the way she would want to be treated if she were a man? What if parents and children used this principle as they dealt with each other? What a family that would be!

3. They are kind and gentle with each other. Peter instructed husbands to treat their wives as the weaker vessel - like one would handle something fragile and of great value like china or crystal (1 Pet. 3:7). Wives are to reverence their husbands (Eph. 5:33). Would not the principle of speech being with grace and seasoned with salt (Col. 4:6) apply in our own family?

4. The have a deep love for each other. Husband should love their wives as they do themselves and to the degree that Christ loved the church giving himself for it (Eph. 5:25ff). Wives are instructed to love their husbands and their children if they want to be sound in the faith (Titus 2:4). The characteristics of love found in 1 Corinthians 13 should well describe the love that each family member has for the others.

#### Willingly Accept Their Roles

Some families fight and resist the roles that God has given. Godly families, on the other hand, willingly accept the responsibilities that God placed upon them.

1. The husband willingly takes the lead as the head (Eph. 5:25-28; 1 Pet. 3:1-7). This is not the role of a master, but one of a leader who takes responsibility. He does not push this off on his wife (so he can blame her if things go wrong). He leads with gentleness and understanding (1 Pet. 3:7). He provides for his own (1 Tim. 5:8). This he does without grumbling and complaining.

2. The wife willingly submits to her husband's leadership (1 Pet. 3:1-6; Titus 2:4-5). She does this because she fears God. She seeks to guide the household affairs (1 Tim. 5:14). She is a keeper at home (Titus 2:5). She, like her husband does this without fretting and fussing about her role.

3. The children willingly respect and obey parents (Eph. 6:1-4; 2 Tim. 3:1-5).

#### Discipline and Train Their Children

Far too many families, even among God's people, don't discipline and train their children as they should. In contrast, godly families may seem to be odd and strict compared to most in the world and some among Christians.

1. They discipline their children. Discipline will include instructing, correcting and even **spanking** their children. Proverbs gives many such instructions to parents (Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15).

2. They train their children in the way of the Lord. More important than secular education is the spiritual training for children in godly families. They train their children in the way of the Lord (Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:1-4). They strive to saturate their children with the word of the Lord (Deut. 6:7).

3. They are strict, watchful and careful with their children. Some parents rear their children as if they just assume that all is going to turn out right. At times they have no idea what their children are watching, listening to or who they are with. Godly parents are concerned about where things could lead (even though the matter of concern may not be wrong within itself). To illustrate, there was nothing wrong with the children of Israel living in houses they didn't build or drinking from wells they didn't dig. But God warned that they could easily forget about God in the midst of that (Deut. 6:12).

Godly parents know that good morals can be corrupted by association with evil (1 Cor. 15:33). Thus, they want to know who their children's friends are. They want to know what movie the children are going to watch. They are going to know something about the music their children listen to. They are going to know who their children are e-mailing and chatting with on the Internet. They will be watchful of what is being taught in their classes at school. There will be many places their children can't go (even if other "Christians" can). There will be many rules and restriction their children have.

Do you have a godly family? What is the atmosphere in your home? How do you treat each other? Do you accept your role? Are you training your children in the way of the Lord. May God help us all to have families pleasing to him.