

When Christ Comes To Your House

by Walton Weaver

There is a story of two simple folk who lived in a fisherman's cottage in a little village by the sea. When the man came home at the end of the day, his wife said to him, "The new preacher came here today, and he asked a question I couldn't answer." "What did he ask?" the husband queried. "He asked me," she said, "Does Jesus Christ live here?" "And what did you say?" the husband demanded. "I didn't know what to say," she answered. "Well couldn't you tell him that we are respectable people?" he asked. "But he didn't ask me that." "Well, why didn't you tell him we go to church when we feel like it?" he inquired. "But he didn't ask me that either," she replied. "Then you could have told him that we read the Bible---sometimes, " he added. "But he didn't ask me that. What he asked was, 'Does Jesus Christ live here?'"

What would your answer be to this question? This is a question that should be put before every home. Every mother and father should answer it. What difference does it make when Jesus is in our homes? No doubt the qualities that characterized Jesus Christ will characterize the members of our household.

1. There will be a deep reverence for God. This is indicated in His closeness to God, and in His desire to always do the will of the Father. Jesus often prayed unto the Father, and He was ever reminding his listeners that He came to do the Father's will (Jno. 5:19, 30; 6:38; 8:29). He sought to honor God in everything that he did (Jno. 8:49-50). His every thought, word, and act were motivated by this desire to please God. This kind of reverence for God will characterize the members of our family when Jesus lives in our house.

2. There will be an emphasis on spiritual things. When Jesus went into the home of Mary and Martha, He reprimanded Martha because she was "worried and bothered about so many things" (Lk. 10:41). He praised Mary because she had "chosen the good part" (vs. 42). It is so easy to become preoccupied with the ordinary things involved in making a living and keeping house. These are things that must be done, but when our doing of them leads us to neglect the "necessary things," it is a sure sign that Jesus does not live in our house. When Jesus lives in our house we will be "listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet" (vs. 39). Parents will see that the family members give Him priority, teaching them by example and from the word of the Lord that some things must be laid aside momentarily (like a sport's event, a trip, watching T. V., a new car) in order that there will be time and money for the "necessary things" (like public and private worship, visiting, teaching others, and being a cheerful and liberal giver of our money).

3. There will be love and peace. Jesus was a man who loved people (Jno. 11:36; 13:23), even the whole world (Rom. 5:7-8). As the "prince of peace" He came to bring peace (Lk. 2:14), and yet He also brought division. Some households become divided because some in the family become Christians, just as Jesus taught that this would be the inevitable result of His teaching (Matt. 10:34-39). But even in a case where there is division of this sort, it may still be possible for a reasonable amount of harmony to prevail, and certainly there must always be love. Peter gives specific instruction to wives who are married to unbelieving husbands, telling them how they are to live with them (1 Pet. 3:1-6). He shows that by being submissive and living exemplary lives before them they might hope to win them to Christ.

Of course, "if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace" (1 Cor. 7:15). Love, coupled with "the

things which make for peace" (Rom. 14:19), will bring strength and stability to our homes. There is no place for all the disorder, bickering, fussing and fighting that we find in so many homes; even where the family members claim to be Christians. No home can be characterized by such confusion when Christ is living there.

4. There will be discipline. Christ lived a disciplined life. When He lives in our homes there will be disciplined fathers and disciplined mothers. By this I mean there will be fathers who are fulfilling their role as fathers, and mothers who are meeting their responsibilities as mothers. This takes discipline, or living within certain guidelines and limits as prescribed by Scripture. There will be fathers who are providing for the physical (1 Tim. 5:7) and spiritual (Eph. 6:4) needs of the family, and mothers who "keep house" (1 Tim. 5:14) and are "workers at home" (Tit. 2:5). This requires self-discipline and a desire to be faithful in these roles as Christians. One must also have a strong desire to succeed in the rearing of their children.

There will also be disciplined children in the home where Christ lives. This requires that reasonable rules be set by parents. Parents cannot expect their children to be self-disciplined to the point that they will need no discipline from them. It is by discipline received from parents that children learn to discipline themselves as they grow up. The limits that are set must be clearly understood, and there must be disciplinary consequences enforced when the limits are not respected. The "rod" must not be spared when the authority of either parent is defied. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son" (Prov. 13:24).

Other consequences may be used when the offence is less severe. If discipline is not practiced in the very early years it is not likely to be successful when the children get older. When teenagers do not obey their parents, the parent may wonder, "Where did I go wrong?" The answer will likely lie in the fact that the parent started too late to practice discipline. The key to success is begin early, and be consistent.

Does Christ live in your house?