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**BOOKLETS FOR
CHURCH PEOPLE**

(No. 4.)



HOME LIFE



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HOME LIFE.

Thomas Carlyle never forgot the strongest spiritual influences of his youth—his mother's praying. In describing it, he speaks of "The highest whom I know on earth, I here saw bowed down, with awe unspeakable, before a Higher in heaven: such things especially in infancy reach inwards to the very core of your being."

This brings us to the central fact of the right kind of home life. There are four factors that go to the making of character—work, play, neighbours, and God—and it is only in a home of the right kind that these find their due proportion.

1. GOD.

We start with God because in most homes He is least in evidence. This is not necessarily because the parents do not want Him in their homes or their lives, although sometimes that is the reason. It is often because they are inarticulate about Him. They may pray in secret. The mother may teach the

children when very small to say their prayers. But there is a reserve, a shyness that hides as much as possible any frank acknowledgment of Him. For the right kind of home life this must be overcome. It is best overcome when the children are small, or even before there are children at all. If husband and wife have both faced up to Christian discipleship they will not be shy in speaking together of their Saviour and Friend. They will want to read God's Word together, as well as any comments or notes helping them to understand it. They will want to kneel together and commend their life and its interests to God. Then as the children join the household they will naturally fit in to this pattern of a home and will share in the home's appreciation of the reality of God and fellowship with Him. There is nothing so well worth while as the placing of God in the centre of the family circle. It is a wonderful thing when father and mother and the children, at some crisis in the family's destiny, can kneel together and with assurance seek God's face and ask His help and guidance. Apart from the immediate result in the fortunes of the family, the children go

out into life with an understanding of the right place of God in their lives. So Carlyle was able to say that his mother's praying left an indelible mark on his young life.

2. NEIGHBOURS.

Continuing to consider these factors in character in their reverse order, we come to neighbours. No one can live his life either just to himself or to his family. The contact of person with person is a most vital influence in the making of character. So playmates, school fellows, relatives in and outside the home all share in the building up of the character of the inmates of the home, and so affecting the quality of the home life. It is not possible, nor is it desirable, to shield growing boys and girls from all the rough winds of fortune that may blow upon them. They will have to take their shocks and their knocks. But it is of the utmost importance that in the home they can be sure of understanding sympathy and advice. It is a bad thing for them to have to hide the hurts of the day or the new mysteries with which they have come into contact and not feel that there is that freedom

of intercourse in the home that makes such unburlening easy. This freedom will come only when there is a judicious blending of discipline and comradeship. Dr. Fosdick tells how when he was a boy his father, when leaving the house on a Saturday morning, said to his mother, "Tell Harry he can cut the grass to-day if he feels like it." Then he opened the door again and added, "Tell him he had better feel like it." He says he cut the grass, and as he did so he laughed over his father's way of putting it. He said further: "He was my closest chum, my best friend, and I had heard him pray for me when I was certain that he meant it."

It is seldom realised how great are the opportunities for directing character through the invitations extended to the right type of companions to come to the home and meet the children there. This is the kind of control that is available to all parents, and with a little self-denial it could be put to greater use with most rewarding results.

3. PLAY.

A growing problem in the world is the right use of leisure. Training in this

should be an important part of home life. Some children must have their amusement made for them. They have not been helped to have inner resources that will keep them from boredom when they are alone. There never was a time in the world's history when such variety of occupation was available as there is to-day; and yet unless direction is wisely given in the home, the children will soon want all their leisure filled in outside the home. Sports and games where they all partake is a necessary part of school and community life, but there is a tendency now to assume that youth must have almost all its leisure time catered for outside the home. Healthy recreation can and should be provided, and it is good that this is done in connection with the Church where possible, but it is not in the best interests of the nation or of the young people themselves that they should find it irksome to stay at home in the evenings and find their pleasure in the family circle. In the right kind of home life the family will be found all together on frequent occasions, and the spirit of comradeship, understanding and mutual love and appreciation will be evident. Young people cannot afford

to lose the grip of their homes upon them; and when school days are over and they go out to work, every effort should be made to help them to retain their place in the warmth of the family circle.

4. WORK.

Too often it is assumed and sometimes stated that work is something to be avoided. The right kind of home will combat that attitude in the children as they grow up. They will be helped to see that work is honourable and that each of us depends so much on the labour of others that unless we take our part in contributing our share, we shall not be worthy of our place in the community. More than this, commencing with the small duties in the home, children should be helped to see some satisfaction in work done willingly and well. All work that is of benefit to the community is creative and should invite interest in doing it well. The way work is done affects character. When therefore the members of the family go out to take their place in the work-a-day world of the community in which they live, it will make all the difference to

their character if they can be made to see that work is a good and desirable thing, and that, according as it is done, gladly and well, life becomes a happier and more worthwhile thing. Such an attitude in turn has its bearing on the life inside the home.

So, to sum up, with God at the centre of our family life, with a conscious loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ and with Him as Partner in our undertakings, home life will be a good and beautiful thing, and through the four factors of God, neighbourly contact, play and work, Christian character, fine and attractive, will be seen in the community.

Readers of this pamphlet will surely realise the need for keeping the life of the Church in the community strong and virile, and will do all in their power to help to this end. Will you do your part?

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