

Bungalow Blessings: Unity in Our Marriages and Homes

By Evelyn Knowles

Why unity? In this postmodern age and its selfish worldview, we are urged to "look out for #1" and to think of self above all. Truth doesn't matter - in fact, there is none if it impedes our own progress or stands in the way of our personal agenda.

Fact is, while we are individuals we cannot stand alone. We were born into families. We're part of communities, a nation, the church, the Family of God. The Bible says it is not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18), that two are better than one (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12), that a man and woman are to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28), and that the physical body is a unit (1 Corinthians 12:12-21).

Unity is essential and can be sweet when we live by God-given principles for authority and order in our home (2 Peter 1:12-15).

Ben Merold said, "Methods are many, principles are few. Methods may change, principles never do." Here are 10 changeless principles that will help us maintain unity in our marriages and homes.

1. **Filter everything through the first and greatest commandment.** "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40).

Adam Clarke said, "All of life is filtered through our love of God."

2. **Prioritize kingdom life.** "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

Victor and I took this verse as our lodestar when we were united in marriage August 7, 1967.

3. **Do it for Jesus and earn His smile.** "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men..." (Colossians 3:23).

Whether its fixing three meals a day or picking up after children, sing "I'll do it all for Jesus!" This is actually a heaven or hell issue for Jesus said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me...whatever you did not do for the least of these, you did not do for me. Then

they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:40,45,46).

Oswald Chambers said, "What a pang will go through us when we suddenly realize that we might have produced downright joy in the heart of Jesus by remaining absolutely confident in Him, no matter what was ahead."

4. **Practice prayer and praise.** First, pray about everything. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God...will guard your hearts and minds..." (Philippians 4:6,7). "Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Feathered Faith (Author Unknown)

*Said the sparrow to the robin,
"I would surely like to know
What makes these busy humans
Rush about and worry so!"*

*Said the robin to the sparrow,
"I don't know unless it be
They have no Heavenly Father
To care for them like you and me."*

Then, praise Him in song. A vast army surrounded Jehoshaphat and his army. Notice their strange but successful strategy. "Early in the morning...Jeshoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness...As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated" (2 Chronicles 20:20-22).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16).

5. **Respect and submit to your husband.** "...and the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33). The KJV says she must *reverence* her husband. This means deference, homage, and obeisance. *Both* husbands and wives are told "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21).

"Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord" (Colossians 3:18). If nothing else, for the position of authority God gave him (1 Corinthians 11:3). Why be respectful and submissive? So that nothing will hinder your prayers (see 1 Peter 3:1-7).

6. **Respect and encourage your children.** Family is Kingdom work. Don't be so busy in the Lord's work that you come up short on the home mission field.

Your children are your mission field. Bless them in the name of Jesus. Don't do anything that would cause them to become discouraged (Colossians 3:21). "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" (Proverbs 17:22).

Jesus said much about children in Matthew 18. "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (v. 3). "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (v. 4). "Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me" (v. 5). "If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (v. 6).

7. **Always be kind: allow no room for ugliness or gossip.** I once heard a Christian woman say, "Sometimes you just have to get ugly to get things done." I disagree with that approach.

The Virtuous Woman of Proverbs 31 was praised because "the law of kindness is on her tongue" (v. 26 KJV).

Several years ago I clipped out a column by Abigail Van Buren: "Gossip can be harmful to children." It reads as follows:

"When I was growing up, my mother and the other ladies in our church were extremely polite to each other. However, when one of them wasn't present, the others would talk behind her back. They would compliment a woman to her face, then criticize her as soon as she walked away.

"Mother always defended this behavior as a 'harmless' pastime. I don't know if it hurt the people who were the butt of gossip, but it harmed me and the kids who were listening.

"This taught me not to trust anyone - especially people who were nice to my face. Instead, I trusted abusive people because I thought they were honest. I ended up with a bad crowd and with abusive men.

"When someone complimented me, I didn't believe it. I never developed self-confidence. I had trouble making friends with other girls because I was afraid to open up and reveal my feelings for fear that whatever I said would become grist for the gossip mill.

"After a year of therapy, I have found the self-confidence I lacked. My sisters haven't been so lucky. Neither has friends. Both are married to abusive men.

"Abby, please inform your readers that there is nothing 'harmless' about gossip, especially to children who may overhear it." (Signed) Gaining Trust in Georgia.

8. **Understand the need for love and forgiveness.** One day I cried out to the Lord, "O, God. It hurts so much!" It seemed as though I heard Him say, "Yes, I know. You do that to me all the time."

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13).

Substitute your name for "love" in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. "Love [your name] is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."

9. **Stop complaining and start giving thanks.** Do you "shine" or do you "whine?" "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life..." (Philippians 2:14-16).

Speak like the stars and the skies do! "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world" (Psalm 19:1-4).

"My tongue will speak of your righteousness and of your praises all day long" (Psalm 35:28).

Contrast the above with: "A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping" (Proverbs 19:13b).

When the Children of Israel grumbled against Moses, God took it personally. "How long will these people treat me with contempt?" (Numbers 14:11).

10. **Honor God with your "stuff" and your time.** "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48).

Our "stuff" is all God's. "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:20).

Wasting time is wasting life. "Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16). Several years ago I wrote this poem:

MORE THAN THIS MOMENT

*There's more than this moment,
There's more than this life.
There's more than tomorrow,
Come joy or come strife.*

*There's more than this body,
There's more than its health.
There's more than providing
Material wealth.*

*There's more than amusement,
There's more than to laugh.
There's more than pursuing
A soft, easy path.*

*For God, my Creator
Has known all along
The things that would break me,
Or give me a song.*

*He offers His wisdom
And gives His advice;
And when its all over
Gives eternal live.*

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