

10 HABITS of Highly Healthy Homes

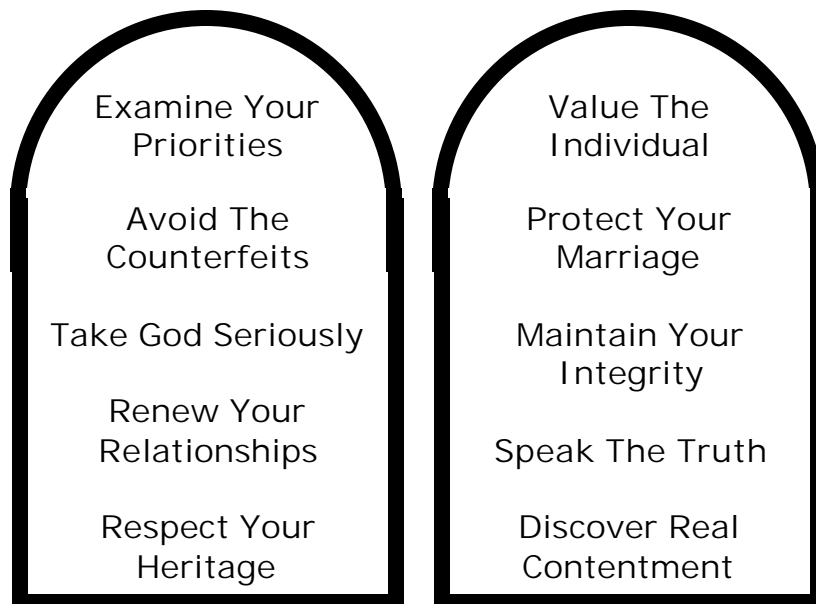


Habit 1: Examine Your Priorities

Sunday, May 28, 2000

*You are cordially invited to join us for **The Re-Wedding** on Sunday Evening, July 30 at 6:30, as dozens of couples renew their marriage vows in the biggest wedding in the history of Saint John.*

Ten Habits of Highly Healthy Homes



- Canada is currently in a conflict over “family values” that has nearly escalated to an all-out cultural war. There is a movement by governments, courts and special interest groups to systematically remove from law the spiritual principles that Canada’s founding fathers stood for, claiming that these principles reflect outdated traditions no longer relevant to public policy.
- If Canada were indeed a better place as a result of these changes, we could openly cheer our leaders for being so insightful, wise and discerning to make choices that will secure our future. The statistics for the last 40 years, however, draw a tragically different picture:
 - The divorce rate has increased more than 5 times.
 - The number of single parent families has increased by 34%.
 - Violent youth crime has increased by 116%.
 - The teen suicide rate has increased by 600%.
 - The federal debt per capita has skyrocketed more than 2000%.
 - Child abuse cases have seen a staggering rise of over 1700%.
 - We now abort 1 of every 5 children conceived in our country.
- The Bible warns us that turning from God’s absolute principles will result in destruction and the collapse of a nation. The Fathers of the Confederation built a good foundation, but the “governing elite” are determined to disregard the living faith of our country’s founders!
- Canada’s coat of arms, adopted in 1921, stands upon the Latin phrase “A Mari Usque Ad Mare,” which translated means “from sea to sea,” a reference to Psalm 72:8.
- Canada was literally built on the Bible, with our official motto coming from Psalm 72:8, “He shall have dominion from sea to sea.” Until just a few years ago, July 1st was called “Dominion Day” which was a recognition of the sovereignty of God. Today, it is called “Canada Day.”
- In 1535, Jacques Cartier sailed up the St. Lawrence River to Montreal. To commemorate the founding of Montreal, Cartier wrote in his diary, “We all kneeled down in the company of the Indians and with our hands raised toward heaven yielded our thanks to God.”

- Sir Samuel Leonard Tilley, Premier of New Brunswick and one of the Fathers of Confederation, rose each morning to start his day with prayer and Scripture reading. As the 33 Fathers gathered in Charlottetown to discuss and draft the terms of the British North America Act, there were many suggestions on what to call this new “United Canada.” That morning, as Tilley read from Psalm 72:8, he became so convinced that Canada should be a nation under God, that when he came down to the conference session, he presented the inspired “Dominion of Canada.” The other Fathers readily agreed and accepted. Today, the following words hang in the corridor near the Confederation Chamber in Province House: “In the hearts of the delegates who assembled in this room on September 1, 1864, was born the Dominion of Canada. Providence being their guide, they builded better than they knew.”
- In 1960, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker introduced the Canadian Bill of Rights. It begins with, “The Parliament of Canada, affirming that the Canadian Nation is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God.”
- In 1981, Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau signed his name to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter begins, “Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of the law.”
- To those who would explain away Canada’s Christian heritage on the back of “cultural progress,” saying that today we are a different society and must protect all viewpoints and rights, the words of G.K. Chesterton are a stinging rebuke: “The danger when men stop believing in God is not that they will believe in nothing but that they will believe in anything.”
- We are at a critical juncture in Canada’s history. An astonishing 80% of North Americans feel that our countries are in moral crisis and want their politicians to address spiritual concerns. Many are taking up the cry that we need to get back to “Family Values” but nobody is defining what they are. William Bennett said, “It’s now politically correct to believe in family values, but it’s not politically correct to get specific about them.” Newsweek ran a cover story a couple of years ago entitled “Whose Values?” Whose family values are you going to follow? Because there are a lot of different kinds of “families” in Canada!
- Thousands of years ago God gave Ten Values for family living, God’s “Big Ten.” They’re called the Ten Commandments. These are not fads or political buzzwords, they are values that are the bedrock of western civilization, the foundation for our entire judicial system.
- Virtually all belief systems consider the majority of the Ten Commandments as good for the human race. Three religions (Jews, Christians and Muslims) agree that they are literally “words from God.” Only one religion (the church of Satan) is on record as opposing them.

- In the Hebrew language in which they were first delivered, the Ten Commandments are called “Aseret Dev’rote” or the “Ten Words.” They are brief and clear directives from God. They are not merely sayings, but are meant to translate into holy actions. There is something about the Ten Commandments that holds each of us accountable.
- How many of you live by the Ten Commandments? What if I said “name them”? Newsweek once reported that only 49% of Protestants and 44% of Catholics could name even four of them! How can you live by them if you can’t name them?
- WHY DID GOD GIVE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS? Not to hurt us but to help us. Not to restrict us but to release us. Not to punish us but to protect us. Every time God says “Don’t” it is for our benefit; we ignore His commands to our own hurt. (i.e. child touching hot stove)
- These are not the Ten Suggestions; they’re not optional. If you jump out a ten-story window, and ignore God’s law of gravity, you don’t break God’s laws, they break you! The same is true of spiritual laws.
- God said in **Deuteronomy 6:6-7**, “And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children.” They are to be an integral part of our families. If we obey them, our homes will be blessed.
- So, for the next ten weeks, we will look at how these “**Ten Habits for Highly Healthy Homes**” can make a difference in our families.

HABIT #1: EXAMINE YOUR PRIORITIES

Exodus 20:2-3 (NLT) ² I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from slavery in Egypt. ³ Do not worship any other gods besides me.

- The order of the Ten Commandments is not haphazard. Habit #1 is the foundation for being a strong family, the very first command and most important command.
- What’s the principle? EXAMINE YOUR PRIORITIES. Put God first! God demands top priority in our lives, and He refuses to play second fiddle to anything. He deserves to be #1 because He made you.
- What does it mean to have “no other gods before Me”? What is a god (small “g”)? It is anything that dominates or controls your life. Even good things that God has created for us to enjoy become gods when you give them first place in your life!
- The last phrase of the first command is its most politically incorrect assertion: “Lo yeyeh le-ach elohim acherim al panai!” which is literally “No gods to be in my face!” Those things we deem more important than God cut off our communication with him! (i.e. paper in front of face)

- Every time God gives a PRINCIPLE, he also gives a PROMISE!
- **Proverbs 3:6 (LB)** In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success.
- Do you want to be successful? EXAMINE YOUR PRIORITIES. Put God first! WHATEVER YOU WANT GOD TO BLESS, PUT HIM FIRST IN THAT AREA.
- The North American divorce rate is now 1 in 3 marriages. But Harvard University did a study: In marriages where the wedding is in a church, the divorce rate is 1 in 50. In marriages where they're married in a Christian ceremony, go to church every week, read the Bible and pray together, the divorce rate is 1 in 1105. Put God first!
- HOW DO I PUT GOD FIRST? Here are five ways ...

F – FINANCES

- **Proverbs 3:9-10 (CEV)** Honor the Lord by giving him your money and the first part of all your crops. Then you will have more grain and grapes than you will ever need.
- God says, "Give me the first part back and I'll bless all the rest!"
- The Bible teaches that money is the number one test of our priorities. Your chequebook reveals what's really important to you; not what you say, but how you spend your money.
- God's Word talks more about giving than either Heaven or Hell; over half of Jesus' parables deal with the subject of money; there are more promises in the Bible about giving than any other subject. Compare Bible words: believe (272 X), pray (371 X), love (714 X), give (2162 X).
- **Deuteronomy 14:23 (LB)** The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives.
- What's tithing? The first 10% of all I make goes back to God. Why is that important? God says if I'm not tithing, He's not really first in my life. If you're in a financial mess right now, the first step is to put God first in your finances. WHATEVER YOU WANT GOD TO BLESS, PUT HIM FIRST IN THAT AREA!
- When should I tithe? On the first day of every week – the day you go to worship, because tithing is an act of worship!
- **1 Corinthians 16:2 (LB)** On every Lord's Day each of you should put aside something from what you have earned during the week, and use it for this offering. The amount depends on how much the Lord has helped you earn.

- Where should I tithe? Where I get fed spiritually – God's storehouse. The matter of TITHING is the only instance where God says, "Test Me! See if I exist! Let Me bless you and prove Myself to you!"
- **Malachi 3:10 (CEV)** I am the LORD All-Powerful, and I challenge you to put me to the test. Bring the entire ten percent into the storehouse, so there will be food in my house. Then I will open the windows of heaven and flood you with blessing after blessing.

I – INTERESTS

- **1 Corinthians 10:31 (NLT)** Whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, you must do all for the glory of God.
- If God's really going to be number one, you must put Him first in your interests – amusements, recreation, hobbies, etc. How do you do that? Everything you do with an ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE puts God first in that area. Enjoy the things He's given to you!
- You can tell what a person's priorities are by seeing what they get excited about. That's what is important to you. A good test is what you talk about the most – if the Lord is first in your life, He's going to be part of your conversation. You won't be ashamed to talk about Him because He comes first! EXAMINE YOUR PRIORITIES.
- **Ephesians 5:19 (LB)** Talk with each other much about the Lord.

R – RELATIONSHIPS

- **Proverbs 27:19 (LB)** A mirror reflects a man's face, but what he is really like is shown by the kind of friends he chooses.
- If you want God first in your life, you're going to have to choose your friends carefully. Why? Because you become like the people you spend the most time with! If you spend time with people who take God lightly, you will tend to become a casual believer. But if you spend time with people who are committed and take God and His Word seriously, you will become a stronger, committed Christian.
- Parents, what type of people are you exposing your children to? Who do you spend time with and invite into your home? Make sure they model the kind of behavior you want your kids to have. (Don't forget that kids model themselves after what they see on TV, too!) THIS IS WHY YOU NEED TO BE PART OF A BARNABAS GROUP!
- **Proverbs 13:20 (CEV)** Wise friends make you wise, but you hurt yourself by going around with fools.
- If you really want God first, then some relationships are wrong for you! It's always easier to pull someone down than to pull someone up!

S – SCHEDULE

- **Ephesians 5:16-17 (PH)** Make the best use of your time, despite all the evils of these days. Don't be vague but grasp firmly what you know to be the will of the Lord.
- How do I put God first in my schedule? I ask Him to help me use my time wisely! I make a TO DO list of things I have to do and say, "God, which of these things do You want me to do?"
- You do not have time to do everything – selection is the name of the game. God has a plan for your life, so if you find yourself having more things to do than you have time to do, it means you're doing some things that aren't God's will! They may be good things, but God never puts more on you than He puts in you!
- If you really want God to be first in your life, then you need to make a daily appointment with Him to read your Bible and pray, and REVIEW YOUR SCHEDULE AND PRIORITIES with Him! Even Jesus felt the need for daily prayer!
- **Mark 1:35 (CEV)** Very early the next morning, Jesus got up and went to a place where he could be alone and pray.
- In Stephen Covey's bestseller, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, habit #3 is very similar to the thought of the first commandment: PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST. In that chapter, Covey introduces the "Four Quadrants of Time Management" ...
- QUADRANT ONE – URGENT AND IMPORTANT
(Crises, pressing problems, deadlines)
- QUADRANT TWO – NOT URGENT AND IMPORTANT
(Planning, relationship building, preparation)
- QUADRANT THREE – URGENT AND NOT IMPORTANT
(Interruptions, popular activities, telephone)
- QUADRANT FOUR – NOT URGENT AND NOT IMPORTANT
(Trivia & busy work, time wasters, pleasant activities)
- Quadrant Two contains all the things we know we need to do, but somehow seldom get around to doing because they aren't urgent!
- Quadrant 1 – Problems, Quadrant 2 – Preparation, Quadrant 3 – Popular, Quadrant 4 - Pleasant
- Stephen Covey: Highly Effective People spend as much time as possible in Quadrant Two! (80/20 Pareto Principle)
- OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE GROWS OUT OF QUADRANT TWO – IT IS IMPORTANT, BUT NOT URGENT. We have to take the initiative!

- **Jeremiah 2:32** Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

T – TROUBLES

- **Psalms 50:15 (CEV)** Pray to me in time of trouble. I will rescue you, and you will honor me.
- God says, "Turn to Me FIRST when you've got a problem!" Prayer should be the first option, not the last resort! God is waiting to hear from you! "Put Me first, even in the tough times!"
- Some people think, I don't talk to God much when times are good and I don't feel like I can bother Him with my problems. God says, "Bother Me! Don't carry it all yourself!"
- How do you know when God is really first in your life? YOU STOP WORRYING! Worry is the warning light that God is not first in my life at this particular moment. When I start worrying, I'm playing God!
- When God is not first in my Finances, Interests, Relationships, Schedule and Troubles – I worry about them! EXAMINE YOUR PRIORITIES!
- **Matthew 6:33 (CEV)** But more than anything else, put God's work first and do what he wants. Then the other things will be yours as well.
- Did you ever notice that Jesus said that right in the middle of a sermon on worry? Putting God first is the antidote to worry!
- **Matthew 6:32-34 (CEV)** Only people who don't know God are always worrying about such things. Your Father in heaven knows that you need all of these. But more than anything else, put God's work first and do what he wants. Then the other things will be yours as well. Don't worry about tomorrow. It will take care of itself. You have enough to worry about today.
- Joshua's commitment: "But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15, LB)
- **If I want to build a successful life and a strong family, I've got to have the right foundation. The first commandment tells me I must put God first. EXAMINE YOUR PRIORITIES!**