

Making a House...a Home

February 6, 2014

In L. Frank Baum's classic tale, *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy from Kansas dreams that her house is removed from its foundation by a cyclone and transported to a strange land. At the end of an elaborate and discombobulating ordeal in Oz, the very homesick girl seeks one thing: Clutching her companion and pet dog, Toto, Dorothy clicks her heels together three times and breaths the famous hope-filled words: "*There's no place like home!*"

Webster defines home as 1. one's residence; 2. the social unit formed by a family living together, 3. a congenial environment; 4. a place of origin, and adds: 5. the objective in various games (to get home, mine). The root word is *homme*, meaning man, or *homo* meaning human being. So *home* is specifically reserved for human beings. In Matthew 8:20 and Luke 9:58 "*Jesus said, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'*" Jesus had nowhere to be home on this earth, because his home was with the Father on high: And He is at *home* in the believer's heart—John 14:23!

I. Home is a place—a residence—but equally an origin and a destination! We can return to it every evening; we can look back and recall the one we grew up in, and we are capable of looking ahead to the homestretch of arriving someday—*home!* Acts 17:26b-27a "*He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him....*"

♥In an early 2010 interview with my husband, I asked him about the home he came from: what he remembered fondly and what not-so-fondly? His reluctant response—for he does not think like this—was that growing up 1. He assumed everybody had a home; 2. remembers a warm and enjoyable feeling when he was home, and 3. felt safe and loved there. What he didn't remember so fondly was the fact that his growing-up family home did not have in-door plumbing.

I asked Cal to give a response to his home, today: his likes and dislikes. He describes our home as 1. a place to come and be away from everything and everyone, 2. filled with warmth and comfort, 3. the joy of being with his wife—me—and our dog, and 4. being able to share our home and the lake-life with our children and grandchildren. He likes less the fact that we have a two-car garage instead of a three-car—probably the car dealer in him. And the several boxes in that garage that still need emptying since we moved here in March of 2006 continue to be a source of irritation that he looks to me for cure. That was my cue to 'call' the interview. But it was a profitable discourse, because he gave me a good picture of what many would say about their home.

As women and homemakers, we are called to create and maintain a *home* that will bless not only our families, but all who God will bring into it—Titus 2. It's not about space but **about sanctuary**; it's not so much about décor but **about diligence**. And it's definitely not about grandeur, but grace. In an **attitude of gracious** living for a witness to our God, we are to keep our home and to:

A. Create a sanctuary—a consecrated place of refuge—of safety, of calm. This would include a physical, psychological, and spiritual place of refuge—to be safe from the elements, the prying gaze and criticism of others, and a place to meet with God every day. Job 29:4 “*Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God’s intimate friendship blessed my house.*” Psalm 46:1 “**God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.**”

B. Use diligence—characterized by steady, earnest and energetic effort (even painstaking). **Proverbs 31:17, 27** “*She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks...27She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.*”

How many stories have been told about diligence? The great race between the tortoise and the hare was all about the reptile’s diligence winning the day. “A swift foot over hill and down dale will not keep pace with a slower traveler upon level ground,” says Rev. Charles Spurgeon. “This truth I may remember to my profit in my daily cares and needs.”

In the New Testament, Jesus tells us about a woman who lost a coin, and searched for it diligently until she found it. Success is 90% about being diligent—keeping on, keeping on! In the verse in Psalm 46:1 we see that God is our refuge and he is our strength for diligence and vigorous effort. So he is both for us! Spurgeon again, “It will be my wisest course to go at once to my God, and not to wander in a roundabout manner to this friend and that.”

C. With a gracious attitude—grace that is marked by kindness, mercy and courtesy and characterized by charm and good taste—and all this accomplished with the proper *attitude*.

◆Did you hear the ‘one’ about the small country church holding their quarterly business meeting to discuss the spending of some left-over monies in their building fund? A motion was made to buy a chandelier for the foyer to bring some grace and beauty to their church. Discussion circled around the cost of the chandelier, where it would be gotten, who would get it and put it up, and whether or not they were becoming a little uppity in even wanting a chandelier. As tensions grew, one somewhat hearing-challenged older deacon ungraciously called out: “I don’t know a thing about the ‘chan-de-liere’, but I do know that we’ve got to use some of that money to **put a light in the entry!**”

Often our husbands are going to be the practical ones! “Just put a light in the hall, or just put a table by my chair,” they’ll say. But God has placed within us his wisdom, understanding and knowledge **to create a place of refuge, to use diligence, and to do it with a gracious attitude. Proverbs 24:3-4** “*By wisdom a house is built, and through **understanding** it is established; 4Through **knowledge** its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.*” This may include having the table and chair match, placing them in a certain position for a view, and setting a few items on the table for conversation and a comfortable climate. We may even want that light in the hall to make a statement that speaks *home*. But whatever we do, we do it with the proper attitude of graciousness.

► **Attitude is** serious stuff! Webster defines attitude: (1) posture, (2) mental position or feeling with regard to a fact or state, and (3) the position of something in relation to something else—so basically our **posture and position as it relates to graciousness**.

1. Our *posture* would be the outward expression of our attitude. How might we determine someone’s graciousness from their posture? What would genuinely express kindness, mercy, courtesy, charm and good taste? Not overdoing and overspending on our home, but not neglecting it either—understanding that moderation is valuable, but that God is for us preparing our house to be a home.

2. *Mental position or feeling with regard to a fact or state* would be the inward thinking and feeling processes that go along with the outward expressions. The thoughts of the gracious person would be involvement in the situation with feelings such as: “How can I help you?” “What do you need most?” etceteras.

3. Still dealing with our attitude, the third definition is the *position of something in relation to something else*. This applies to our relationship to God, family and others. If we’re in God’s family then our attitudes need to reflect His.

II. Home is a gathering—social unit—family, pets, friends, belongings and cherished memories! And homesickness would be a longing for home and family while absent from them—representing what ‘Dorothy’ experienced.

Terry Willits, in *Creating A Sense Sational Home*, shares: “I have been profoundly shaped by the home in which I was raised far more than with just words. My mother taught me by example much of what I know and value about home. She exemplified diligence in every way and had many outside interests, but our home was a priority. My mother built our home with dignity, purpose and joy. She understood that her investment into our home and lives had value. She passed on her positive attitude about the home.”

III. Home is a destination—environment and objective—love and acceptance, peace and security and wisdom’s longing! Homey refers to the characteristics of a home. A house can be abandoned and destroyed, but a home lives on.... For Christ-followers, our *home* will eventually be heaven!

●**Love in the home lives on.** ”The key is to make our relationship with Jesus the priority of our lives,” said Anne Graham Lotz in her book, *My Heart’s Cry*. And she says of her mother Ruth Graham: “My mother chose to make abiding in Christ one of the priorities of her life.” As we are filled with God—because God is love, we are filled with his love! And he has promised to “*pour out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*”

What would justify not loving? NOTHING! Incompatibility does not justify not loving; just as the unlovable do not reason us out of loving. Our love for husband, children—the dearest on earth—is the fruitful product of our love for the Lord God. Lotz again: “If we want more of His love in our homes, then we must give Him more of our hearts.”

●**Peace in the home lives on.** Who in the family is rude, critical, hostile, abrasive, belligerent, unkind, selfish and condescending? Do we struggle with knowing the will of God for peace in our homes? **Abide** in Him; **Ask** of Him. Psalm 127:1a “*Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain....*” Hebrews 3:4 says, “*For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.*”

●**Wisdom in the home lives on.** Proverbs 14:1 “*The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.*” Notice the warning to build: when we stop building, we may become complacent and begin to tear down.

At the top of Jesus’ list of homes he loved to visit had to be the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany. **We know of three separate visits that Jesus made to that home—each visit action- and lesson-packed.** Luke 10:38-40a

says, “As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. 40aBut Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.”

Now we so know this account of the busy homemaker versus the better chooser—and Jesus. Notice in the end that Jesus does not say that one of these sisters is better than the other, but only that one had chosen what is better. All of our activity in making our house a home needs to be tempered with making Christ and the worship of and devotion to him paramount.

In John 11:3 Scripture says, “*Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.*”

The first 37 verses of this 11th chapter recount Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead and verse 27 records Martha's profession of who Jesus really was—one of only four disciples to say: "*I believe that you are **the Christ, the Son of God**....*"

Then later in John 12:1-3 Scripture records: "*Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. **2Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor.** Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. **3Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.***" Again Martha is serving—Lazarus is at the table listening to Jesus—and Mary is devoting, but there is no jealous or frustrated outburst. Jesus has permeated these siblings' hearts and their *home*. And they have made Him the main thing, and the worship of Him the better thing!

This dinner and Mary's extravagant anointing of his feet came just days before Jesus was crucified. And as our Lord and Savior contemplated his own home-going, he looked down from the cross and saw his mother there—Mary. And he gave his mother a new home to live out her years on earth: He entrusted her to the care of John the Beloved and to his home, and John 19:27 ends with "*this disciple took her into his home.*" Jesus' heart is that those he loves have a home!

There's no place like home. There's no place like home!

Pam Ryans authored the following ad on the Web for a *House For Sale*: "**Address**—heaven; **Features**—many rooms with a master suite; spacious love, open floor plan for peace, large eat-in grace, fenced in mercy with room for expansion, 'Son' room with a marvelous view of salvation—with a pool of milk and honey in the back and Pearly Gates in front." She added the **number to call** as John 3:16 and the **directions** as John 14:6, with the **list price** of \$0.00—Calvary—Owner Financing.

Today, the Lord Jesus Christ is preparing a place for us; he has been preparing it since before he ascended to the Father. John 14:2 "***In my Father's house** are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.*" Why would he need to prepare a place for us in the Father's house? I don't know the answer to that, but it's most wonderful to imagine; a place—a home—for us being prepared by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Father's house. 1 Corinthians 2:9 justifies our wonder: "*...no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.*" For thousands of years, Jesus has been making the Father's house into a *home* for us who believe!