

OpenTheo

Home Insteading



Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg examines the concept of Home Insteading and encourages Christians to consider alternative options to traditionally accepted practices. He suggests that while Scripture offers certain guidelines, there are areas where believers have the freedom to make choices that align with their values. Gregg advocates for home births, Christian education, and the option of self-employment or home-based businesses, cautioning against blindly following dominant culture practices that may not reflect godly principles. Ultimately, he encourages listeners to prayerfully consider these matters and make decisions according to their own conscience.

Transcript

What I'm going to do tonight in wrapping up this segment of our larger series is talk about a subject that I call home insteading. Many of us have moved away from cities in order to live simpler lives, to maybe get a little bit more back in touch with the land and so forth, and to do things that have typically been called homesteading in past history. But it's not so much that homesteading is a biblical value, although many of us value it and many of us would rather do that than live in the cities.

But rather home insteading, doing certain things at home instead of somewhere else, actually does have some biblical basis. Again, it's simply a matter of what it takes to strengthen the family ties and to organize one's life more in terms of the family relationships that God has ordained, and to have those more central to the things that we do on a daily basis. There are many things, many ways in which the Industrial Revolution took people away from their homes.

Before the Industrial Revolution, of course, far more people were involved in agrarian pursuits. Families worked together on the farms, or even when they had businesses, many times families worked together in businesses, or people worked at home and sold their wares in town. But there were many things about the society at large that kept the family together more.

And with the coming of the industrial age and factories becoming the primary sources for

jobs and income for people, people began to move to the cities. People got jobs at the factories, which took them away from their family for long days and many days a week. We sometimes hear of people in our age complaining about a 40-hour workweek, but originally it was not uncommon for people to work six days a week, 12 hours a day, maybe even seven days a week.

And this kind of schedule took people away from their homes, away from their families. In many cases, the children went out into the factories to help supplement the income, women too. And before long, it became ordinary American way of life, or Western civilization's way of life, for families to be separated in the pursuit of income or satisfaction or fulfillment or whatever.

It became more common as people had more money to send their children off to colleges or away to school, or for children to strike out on their own away from the family earlier on in their lives. It became more common to pay professionals to do things that had previously been done at home. So that medical care and the birth of babies and a lot of other issues, which used to be largely home-based.

Whoever remembers the cliches about doctors making house calls, they don't do that anymore. But even medical care used to be largely done in the setting of the family. And people used to recuperate from surgeries and from illnesses with their families surrounding them, rather than a room full of hospital beds with strangers in them that were tried to keep sterile with strangers taking care of them.

I'm not saying that all of those things are evils. And I want to, before I go any further, tonight, make this caveat about everything I'm going to talk about tonight. And that is that, whereas the Bible does give specific commands about many things in Scripture, it does not give specific commands about the points I'm going to make tonight.

Which means that people who choose not to follow some of the suggestions I'm going to make are not necessarily violating any command of Scripture, and therefore cannot be said to be sinning. On the other hand, there are many things in Scripture that, as we look at it more closely, we can see that they provide norms of life that were taken for granted among Christian people, and even in some cases among non-Christian people, society at large, which followed biblical values more closely than some of the modern conventions of our society do. And so I would simply present tonight certain things to you, not by way of imposing obligation, because to impose obligation, the particular points I'm going to talk about tonight would be legalism.

It would be wrong. It would be going beyond Scripture. And I don't want anyone to get the impression that they should judge anybody, or that I'm judging anybody, based on their compliance with any of these issues or not.

But if we're talking about a radically Christian culture or way of life, we need to realize

that just following the norms of the dominant culture, wherever they may end up, is not necessarily conducive to remaining true to the structures that God ordained. And I think Christians should be among those who can have a counter-culture among themselves for the simple reason that they don't just follow like lemmings to whatever the trend in civilization or society is, but that they evaluate things and say, is this really conducive to the spiritual aims that I as a Christian have for myself or my family? And therefore, what I'm going to suggest to you are suggestions that I think are conducive, or in many cases, for most people would be conducive, to improved strength in families, closeness of families, and just glorifying God more in the institution of family than our current culture does. And having said that, I want to say that I think that even if some of you already do these things, or on the other hand, some of these things can't relate to you because of the stage in life you're at or some other consideration, I hope you won't find these things irrelevant to life in general.

I'm talking about a holistic view of involving the family in ways of life that our modern culture often doesn't think to do. And, well, for example, I received a phone call on my radio program yesterday, a lady I don't know from, I think she was from Eugene or Salem, Oregon, I forget now where, she said, does the Bible say anything about the sphere of a woman's activity? She said, I have a daughter who's 16 years old, and she and I, the mother and the daughter, she said, both really would like for her to go the direction of being a married woman and a mom and a homemaker and a stay-at-home kind of mom when she grows up, but at age 16, there's a lot of pressure in our church. They're saying that we should be looking for a college for her to go to and thinking about her career and so forth.

And she says, we feel under a lot of pressure. Is there anything in the Scripture on this subject? Well, of course, there is. And I was glad to be able to turn her to specific texts of Scripture that indicate that the principle and normative sphere of a grown woman is to be a mother at home.

Now, of course, Paul knows of exceptions. Paul said some women are called to be celibate for life, to serve God undistractedly. But Paul treats that as if it is a more unusual kind of a calling, just as it is with men.

But generally speaking, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7, 2, he says, therefore, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and let every woman have her own husband. That's the norm. He, in the same chapter, goes on to talk about the special benefits that come with having a different calling than that.

If you are called to be single and you have the grace to be celibate and undistracted by a single lifestyle and you can serve God without distraction, that's great, Paul says. But he starts out by suggesting that that is not what everybody is called to and probably not even what most people are called to. He says, to avoid fornication, let everyone have a

spouse, except for the exceptions.

So, we can acknowledge exceptions in some cases. But when Paul wrote about the place of women, for example, in Titus chapter 2, he said the older women should admonish the younger women to be keepers at home and to love their husbands and guide their children and so forth. And he said the same thing in 1 Timothy chapter 5 about the younger widows, whose role was to be essentially that of the average younger woman.

He said, I will then that the younger widows marry and bear children and guide the house and so forth. Now, these are passages that give us some norms. But when we say something is a norm, what it means is that something about God's concerns and his heart about certain matters are reflected in the norms.

But that doesn't mean that there are such moral absolutes, that a person couldn't have a calling that is different from that. God can't be put in a box. And there are some people, even the Bible acknowledges, some women are not called to be mothers.

Some women are not called to be married. And so, we have to allow for differences. But that doesn't mean we have to change the norms.

You see, a lot of times the very fact that we suggest that there are biblical norms makes people think that any deviation from it is sin. That's not necessarily true. The Bible can allow for deviation from norms in some cases, in exceptional cases.

But just because there are differences and deviations from the norm doesn't mean we should redefine the norm to be more in line with the exceptions. The norms are there for a reason. Because God has established certain institutions.

They are instructive. They are safe. They are conducive to spiritual well-being.

And if God calls somebody into something different than that which is normative in Scripture, that's okay. God can do that. He's not breaking any moral principles by doing that.

But, of course, if God calls you to do something other than the norm, then that's the safest thing for you to do and most spiritually conducive thing for you to do. To be in the will of God is what's conducive. But the reason I bring up this lady who called about it is that she knew instinctively what she and her daughter wanted to do in terms of directing her into a biblical pattern.

But she didn't know that the Bible said it. And she needed encouragement. Because the church, as it turned out, and her daughter was going to a Christian school.

And both the Christian school and the church were pressuring them to choose a different course for the daughter. And all she needed was a little bit of encouragement. And God

gave her a little bit of encouragement.

He said, you know, this way that you're feeling is actually biblical. You know, God gives you permission to be a homemaker. Not only permission, but encourages it.

And I think there's a lot of people who may be drawn in some of the directions I'm talking about. But they're so contrary to the dominant culture that sometimes it may be encouraging for them to just know that there's permission. Not only permission, but if they're drawn in some of these ways, they're drawn to that which is very much in keeping with the norms of Scripture.

Though if they're drawn another way, they're not necessarily violating any command of Scripture. I gave that long introduction in order to make sure that no one takes anything I'm saying tonight and says, well, the Bible commands that you do this. It does not.

But I would suggest that that which is normative in Scripture, although the Bible doesn't command us to conform to that norm. We should have very excellent reasons before we decide to deviate from the norm. I mean, if God specifically calls or directs or makes necessary a difference.

I mean, for example, we just observed that in Scripture, the norm is for a woman to bear children and guide the home. But there are some women who can't have children through no fault of their own. God just closes the womb.

Well, what are they supposed to do? Stay home and watch television? They don't have any children to take care of? Well, probably not. There may be some other calling outside the home, conceivably, that God may have for them. Or there may be some other calling in the home for them.

But their situation is not the norm. But through no fault of their own, God has so ordered things in their lives that they have something else they have to do. And that may be the case with any of the points I'm going to bring up today.

But all the points I want to talk about tonight, I would put under the general rubric of home instead. Because all of them have to do with activities that in our dominant culture are not done at home generally. They are things that used to be done at home.

And in my judgment, the Scripture would encourage us to do them at home. But our culture just doesn't think to do them at home. They're now done by professionals elsewhere, by institutions, instead of by the family and by the home.

So, I'm going over these things in order to encourage those who maybe would like to deviate from the dominant culture. But the modern church is so locked in to the dominant culture that the Christians who want to change or go a different way may not find any encouragement there. There are six activities that are not commonly done at

home in our dominant culture.

But which I think we might consider doing at home instead. Of what they are commonly done. The first of these has to do with home birth.

Now, again, I want to say this about each of these things. It is not commanded in Scripture that you have your children at home. That is, that you birth them at home.

And certainly there are some who want to birth their children at home and they simply can't. I can't. I've lost count of how many friends of ours chose home birth and had a midwife hired and so forth.

And when it actually came time for the birth, something came up and the midwife felt they should go to the hospital and have the baby there. Some midwives are more cautious in that way than others. But I will allow that obviously there are some births that ought to happen in a hospital.

Probably. There are probably some who don't think that. But I mean, I don't see anything wrong morally with a hospital birth.

But a birth at home has certain advantages. It's more in keeping with the biblical norm, too. In the Scripture, when God made His covenant with Abraham and instituted circumcision as the mark of that covenant in Genesis 17, verses 12 and 13, He says, He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised every male child of your generations.

He who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised. Now, you might say, well, Steve, if these verses almost impose the duty of circumcision more strongly than home birth.

Well, that's true. If we're looking at these verses to figure what duties they imposed on Abraham, we'd have to argue that these did not command home birth. They commanded circumcision.

We know the New Testament does not command that we circumcise our sons. It's very important that we note this in the old covenant. It was necessary for the Jews to circumcise their sons.

It is not in the new covenant. And this, these verses do not command home birth either. They just assume it.

They just assume that Abraham's sons would be born in his house. In the opening chapter of Exodus, we find that as the Hebrews multiplied in Egypt and were made slaves, that Pharaoh called the midwives to him and instructed them to kill the baby

boys at the time of birth. They did not do so because they feared God and the baby boys were spared.

But this tells us a couple of things. First of all, the babies were being born at home. Secondly, because they were born at home, they survived.

If there had been Egyptian birthing clinics overseen by Pharaoh and his regulators, those babies would have been killed at birth. But because they were born in the privacy of their home, they did not succumb to the government's designs against them. Now, I don't want to sound too paranoid.

And I'm sure in Idaho, Northern Idaho, I don't sound as paranoid as I would to people listening to the tapes in Southern California or somewhere like that. But I do not trust institutional medical care as much as I trust my home. Now, I don't mean that to cast any doubts on the integrity of people who work in hospitals or clinics or whatever.

Many of these people are Christians. Many of them are totally honest people and there's nothing wrong with them. The problem is the institutions.

They're regulated so much by the government. It's true, they haven't really required anyone to kill baby boys when they're born yet. But we don't know what they may require yet.

We do know, for example, that many hospitals mix the AIDS patients in all the ordinary wards. They don't have an AIDS ward because there's privacy laws. The AIDS patients don't want to be identified.

So they just mix the AIDS patients in with the other patients. Well, some people might not want their baby born in a ward where they have to spend the first few days of their lives where there's AIDS patients. You know, I don't mean to be paranoid about it, but I think my home is a safer place for my children to be born.

And it's not a spiritual thing in itself, though it could become that. It's very hard to get your baby out of a hospital, your newborn baby out of a hospital without it getting a social security number these days. Eventually, it may be hard to get the baby out of a hospital without it having an implanted chip.

You never know. Babies born in hospitals are not under your control. Babies born at home are.

And since God gave the control of the children to the parents, not to any institution, I personally believe that home birth is a desirable thing, but not a moral issue in itself. It's simply a matter of, is it profitable? In some cases, it is not. If your baby is being born in a way that is not safe because the position is coming out of some other condition, then it would be wiser to have that baby in the hospital in my judgment.

But 90 something percent of all births are without complications. And while there's no, no one should ever judge another person as to whether they had their baby at home or not, I'm saying that babies born at home were normative in Scripture. Who delivered the baby? Jesus.

Not a doctor. Probably Joseph. We don't know.

Maybe they got a midwife in there at the last minute. But the fact of the matter is, you don't have any hospital births in the Bible. That doesn't mean hospital births are wrong, but it certainly means that home births are fairly normative and certainly not irresponsible.

And there are many people who think that if you choose home birth, you're being irresponsible. The Bible certainly would not support that notion. It, a home birth is entirely a responsible way to go.

Of course, unless you've received some prior information that the baby is, you know, can't be safely born at home, in which case I think responsible parents would make different arrangements. Now, I had all of our, we had all of our children at home for a number of purposes, privacy, health, and again, among the issues of privacy, we didn't want medical professionals making the earliest decisions about what's to be done to our children. Unfortunately, you know, we had to take our babies to doctors on very rare occasions.

I think each of our children has been to a doctor maybe once in their life. I'm not sure. But, you know, they haven't been totally below the radar, and I'm not sure they have to be totally below the radar.

All I know is that the hospitals are the places which if the government wants to impose new experiments on babies, that's where they'll find them. That's where they'll find them and they can do what they want and you won't even know they've done it. Again, that sounds mighty paranoid, I imagine, so I won't go any further on that point.

But we certainly encourage home birth. And, you know, one of the things in its favor is that when you go to a hospital, you're going to a place where all kinds of diseases that aren't in your home are. And many people get sick in hospitals who weren't sick when they went.

At least they get sicknesses they didn't have when they came. And if you have a baby in your home, the germs that are in that home, the mother already has basically immunities to the common germs in your home. And so the baby, generally speaking, has those immunities as well.

And it's a safer thing. Now, very few people in this room are still having babies, but a few are. And I just want to say that home birth is the first of several things that I think

Christians would do well to consider as ways of questioning the dominant culture.

And if we would just question more, I'd be happier. It's not even that people would have to agree that home birth is better. I really don't care if people agree with that or not.

I would just like to see Christians develop a habit of questioning the status quo a little more than they typically do, asking the question, is it profitable? Is it better to have the baby in the hospital? Just asking the question is good enough for me. I don't care what answer they give. Most Christians I'm concerned about follow the cultural norms without asking any questions.

They just kind of flow along because the current of the culture is carrying them. Now, to be a radical Christian does not require that you have your babies at home. But it's certainly worth considering.

And there are some, even more paranoid than myself, who are concerned even about birth certificates and things like that. Now, if that doesn't concern you, I don't know that it has to. But obviously, depending on how much you want the government into your baby's life from birth, home birth may be an option Christians should consider more often.

A second home-instead category would be home education. I don't expect that we have any here who would argue with this matter. I'm talking about homeschooling.

And once again, it may surprise you to hear me say it. I don't believe that homeschooling is commanded in scripture. But I certainly think it's best in almost every case that I can think of.

I can't think of. I mean, there may be some cases where homeschooling is not the best option. I just can't think of what they would be.

Some people say, well, what about a single mom? She can't stay home and homeschool her kids, can she? She should be able to if the church did its job. If the church believed, as the scripture teaches, that the woman should be able to be a keeper at home and to care for her children and so forth. If a woman was widowed or if she was abandoned by her husband, that would be a case that the church should take on rather than her having to go get welfare.

And actually, while I personally don't believe in welfare, I believe even less in public schooling. And if it came down to a choice where a woman has to get financial support from the government so she can stay home and care for her children, or she has to get help from the government educating her children so that she can go out and work or whatever and send her kids to school, I'd rather have... If I had to have the government in my life and I want them there as little as possible, I don't want either of those things in my life. And God has blessed us so that we don't need them.

But some people might be in a position where they have to make that choice. Is the government going to educate my children or is the government going to support me financially? Given the two options, I'd much rather have the government support my children financially than to have them educate my children. The finances are much more temporal in their impact.

The education is spiritual in its impact because all education comes from a spiritual base. There is no values-free education. Every education has a religious foundation to it.

If it's not Christian education, then it is pagan education. You see, children need to be taught more than they need to be taught anything else is that God is central to all matters of life, to all relationships, to all choices, to all the stewardship of our time and our thinking, the conversations we have, even the subjects that we devote our time to learning. God has got to be central in our concerns there.

You send a kid to a public school, first of all, they might get a good education. They might not. I know public schools have been pounded on a lot about producing illiterate products, and that does happen.

But there are also public schools that put out very literate and very intelligent young people. I mean, not every school that the state has run has been equally abysmal in its products. But the question, even if your child got the best education in the whole world in a public school, along with that education, is spending six hours a day without reference to God in their life, learning subjects that not God, but the state has decided that they should learn, and learning them from an entirely secular point of view that is not in touch with the reality that the Christian parent believes in.

In some cases, the education can be outright hostile to Christianity, but even where it is not, even where we could say it's neutral, that is hostile to Christianity. That's why there are so many lukewarm Christians. They grew up in a system that taught them that education is neutral.

You know, but Jesus said, if you're not for me, you're against me. And if Jesus isn't given his proper place, if God is not given his proper place in the way we teach people, children, about the natural world or the way they assess literature or many of these other issues, then the children are being deprived of a very important factor in their education. That is to see God in everything and to see everything from God's point of view.

You will not get that in public school. Now, some might say, well, what about Christian school? Christian school is better. Christian school is much better.

There's a very good chance that the Christian school might support your values, that they might even hold the same doctrines you do, and they might have some of the same

protective concerns that you do. They may introduce God and keep God central in all the education. That is certainly far better, in my judgment, than public education will ever do.

But it's not as good as it can be, I think. I believe that one of the biggest dangers of public education is not the curriculum in the public schools. It's not the attitude of the teacher.

The biggest danger to children in public education is the peer group. I know that I went through public school, and I know that I got a lot more of my values from the kids my age, who I associated with day by day, than I did from my teachers or anything in the curriculum. In fact, after a certain age, I just ignored the curriculum anyway, couldn't care less about it.

I realized they were teaching me stuff I couldn't see any value in, and I just, I let my mind wander in class and didn't think anything about what they were teaching me. But what my fellow kids, my peers on the playground, what they thought had a great deal to do with forming my values and my other issues. I was raised in a Christian home, and I had, much more than most of the kids in my school, Christian values, Christian beliefs.

But I learned, in many cases, not to speak up for the Lord in situations where I knew it wouldn't be popular with the kids and so forth. Because, I mean, popularity is an issue. You got to realize, if you send your children away to school, Christian or public, they are going to spend more time in the company of their peers than they spend with their parents.

Now, a lot of parents who send their kids to school, Christian or public, they say, well, I send my kids to school, but I know that I can always catch up with them after school. I can always kind of debrief them. I can kind of help undo the damage done by the school and the school teachers and so forth.

Well, you may be flattering yourself. I don't know that you can. But even if you can, what a waste of your time.

Why send your kids someplace six hours a day where when they come home, you have to spend more time debriefing them? When you could take an option of educating your children, that wouldn't require debriefing. Now, see, the reason I brought up this peer issue is because many times Christian schools have wonderful Christian teachers, but the kids, the peers are not always fully disciplined. Many Christian families put their children in a Christian school hoping that their children will be evangelized there, just like they send them to Sunday school for that reason, rather than because the parents themselves are actively evangelizing and discipling their children.

And therefore, a lot of children in Christian schools aren't Christians at all. And while they

may learn to toe the line while they're under the eyeball of the teachers, they're just like any other pagan kids at the public school when they're not being supervised by the teachers and they have the same sinful nature and they will possibly rub off on your children. Now, the Bible says the companion of fools suffers harm.

It also says foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. So, children are born foolish. And a person who is a companion of fools is going to suffer harm.

If you want to guarantee that your children suffer harm, make sure you put them in a situation where they're companions many hours a day with fools. Best way to do this, send them off to school where the fools congregate. Now, I went to public school.

And so, I very well know the sentiment that arises in some parents when they hear somebody making some kind of appeal for homeschooling. They say, well, you know, I went to public school and I turned out okay. Or some could easily turn it over on me and say, well, Steve, you went to public school, you turned out okay, didn't you? No.

Well, it depends on how we define okay. You know, I'm not going to go to hell when I die. I guess that's okay.

That's better. Better than if I was going to hell. I will say that my own case is somewhat remarkable.

I mean, not unique. There were other cases like it. But of all the kids I knew in my church growing up, I was the only one who really had an outspoken witness for Christ throughout my school time in grammar school, junior high, and in high school.

I did not smoke ever. I never got drunk. I never went to parties.

I was a virgin when I grew up and got married. I never used drugs. And, you know, and then I went into the ministry.

And most people say, well, isn't that, could you want better than that for your kids? And yet you went through public school. Doesn't your own case, Steve, prove that public school does not necessarily corrupt a child? Well, let me say this. If my case did prove that, and I'm not going to grant that, but if my case did prove that public school does not necessarily corrupt a child, that necessarily has to be underscored in italics.

Because if I indeed could be pointed to as one who came through it unscathed, then I cannot be. But if that were the case, granting that for the sake of argument, suppose you could say, Steve, you came through unscathed. You're a good Christian.

You went to public school. It didn't hurt you. Even if that's true, I know about 30 or 40 kids who grew up in the youth group at the church I was raised in from Christian families, genuine, godly Christian families, all of whom, like myself, went through public school.

I don't know of three of them that are still walking with God today. And many of them became utterly corrupt and perverts even. Now, you might say, well, did they get that from public school? I don't know where they got it.

They didn't get it at home from their parents because they weren't at home with their parents. Now, what about me? Was I corrupted? Terribly so. You know, people say, I went through public school and I turned out okay.

You turned out okay? What do you call okay? What standard do you use to decide that you're okay? I don't consider that I'm okay. I'm saved. And that's good.

But I was not untainted. I was not unjaded. I was not uncorrupted coming through school.

I, for one thing, I picked up some bad language for a while in junior high. I discarded it when I got to high school. But for a year or so there, I used some bad language because that's what my peers were doing.

It seemed cool. The styles of my generation became rather important to me in a way they wouldn't have had I been homeschooled. I was more of a slave to those fashions than I would be.

Worse, I was exposed to the most corrupt attitudes toward the opposite sex. And while I didn't live out as some of them did, a lot of those corrupt attitudes, a lot of those things lodged. There are things I heard about.

There are things that were discussed that were not conducive to the purest form of thought that the Bible encourages us to have. Now, you might say, well, Steve, nobody's perfect. Well, I suppose not.

But that's no excuse to not try. That's no excuse not to be as perfect as we can be. The Bible says be perfect.

Let us go on to perfection. It is our desire to be as sinless as we can, as untainted as we can be. We realize we live in a fallen world and we are fallen beings.

And we will not be perfect even if we are given the most ideal circumstances. And you can't protect your children from everything. That's one of the excuses people often give for not homeschooling.

You can't protect your kids from everything. And they act as if that's an argument for protecting them from nothing. Or you can't protect them forever.

That's true. But can't you at least protect them while they're young and vulnerable and most impressionable? You can't protect them forever. But shouldn't you protect them as long as they need it? Remember, children are not simply small adults.

Children are adults under formation. Picking up attitudes, picking up values, picking up ideas from whoever it is they're around. And I would dare say there's very few people here who would say they came through their public school experience as uncorrupted as I did.

But that's only because you don't know how corrupted I was. All of my corruption was inside. It didn't show on the outside.

But am I okay today? All I can say is I'm going to heaven by the grace of God. Do I still have corruption inside? It's still there. Some of it.

Some of it I've gotten over. Some of it I still wrestle with. But I don't want my children to have more of that than they need.

There is such a thing as children coming through their childhood without being totally cynical, jaded, and in various ways corrupted. Another important thing about homeschooling is it becomes more, at least potentially possible, for your children to learn to respect your authority. Whereas when you send them out of the home when they're five or six years old, they come under the authority of others.

And the authority of those others is in conflict with your authority at home in many cases. There are many schools today that will teach your children that homosexuality is a legitimate alternative choice of lifestyle. And they come home and you teach your children, no, it's not okay.

God says it's a sin. And there will be a tug of war over an issue like that between you and the teacher. And since the child actually has to spend more of their day each day under the oversight of that teacher than you, the child will be very much intimidated to... I mean, they may be faithful to your viewpoint.

But the authority that you have as the guardian and guide of their lives is greatly watered down and undermined by farming them out to other authorities who don't share your views, don't share your values. There's a great deal to be said for home education. Now, was Jesus homeschooled? Probably not.

Most of the boys of his age, at his time in history, in the Jewish culture, were sent off to the synagogues for literacy training, mostly because books were not in print. And most homes didn't have books that they could teach their children to read in. The synagogue had the Bible, and that's the only book that was in the culture.

There's nothing else to read in Jewish culture than the scriptures. And only the synagogue had a copy. So it's even possible that some of the parents were not literate enough to teach their children to read.

And so those parents who thought it was important for their children to become literate

would send them off to the synagogue, where they would at least be taught by persons of their same religion and people of their same culture, their same religious culture, and to the large extent of their same values. And they'd be taught primarily scripture. Now, if you've got to send your kids out of the home to be educated, that's about the most ideal kind of out-of-home education that you can hope for.

Christian schooling might come close to that. Public schooling doesn't come within miles of it. Because when you send your kids to public school, they're going to be surrounded by a culture that is not yours, values that are not yours, and the subject matter they'll be learning will not be scripture.

When we began to homeschool, when Benjamin was, oh, I guess he probably was five or six, we decided it was time to start giving him some first grade curriculum. My wife contacted the educational services division, whoever it was, to just find out what kinds of things a first grader should learn. He was our first to homeschool, and we just figured, well, what kind of things do we need to include in this first year of education? And they gave a list, seems like it was several pages long, of just these different things that a first grader was to learn.

So many things. It was just overwhelming. And the things that were on the list were so daunting to a homeschooling parent, because these were the things kids were supposed to learn in first grade.

The list had things I never learned in all the years I was in school. That wasn't many, but I did go through 12 years of schooling and never learned a lot of the things on that list. And the things I did, I didn't learn in first grade.

And I dare say very few first graders in public schools learn probably a quarter of the things on the list. But this is what they said was, you've got to, you're supposed to teach your kids these things. Well, of course, my wife was not at all prepared to teach all those subjects, nor would I have been.

And it was somewhat intimidating. But we discussed it and decided that God did not give the responsibility of rearing and discipling our children to those people who made the list. In fact, those who created this list of subjects that a first grader needs to know were probably not even Christians.

And the Bible specifically says to not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. So why should we look to ungodly people or an ungodly system to counsel us as to what our children need to learn when they're six years old or seven or eight? Don't parents care more about their children than the authorities do outside the home? Don't parents know their children better? And one of the reasons that homeschool children typically get a better academic education than their counterparts in schools is because it's more intimate. The parent, A, cares more about the child, and B, has fewer children to divide her or his time

among than a public school teacher who's got a classroom and doesn't have any, you know, maybe has a few teacher's pets they like to give most of their attention to.

That person might get four or five minutes of the teacher's undivided attention during the school day. Those that aren't teacher's pets, the teacher may not so much as call their name after they've done roll call in the morning, and the child may learn nothing because the teacher can't keep tabs at all. Parents, though, have a vested interest in the well-being of their children, in their children's future.

The teacher only cares that your child makes it through that grade and makes it to the next grade. Parents care about the child's future 50 years from now. And I'm saying, I mean, some public school teachers may care that much, but they're not likely to care that much for all their children in their classes.

You probably have heard, unless you've been totally out of the loop in this matter, that homeschooled children every year test out in the top rungs of academic performance in the nation. I mean, when the standardized tests are given to public schoolers and Christian schoolers and homeschoolers, in all subjects except math, homeschoolers usually test out in the 90-something percentiles, which means that they're among the tops in the nation. In math, I think they're down around the 80-something percentile.

It's not quite as high there, but I'm not sure why homeschooled parents don't do as well in math perhaps. Some of them do. But the point is, it's a good education that these get.

And a lot of these homeschooling parents aren't very well-educated themselves. Neither my wife nor I have a college diploma, but our children are. We don't test our children.

We moved to Idaho partly so we wouldn't have to, not because we were afraid of the results. I'm sure that if we test our children, we'd be, you know. I mean, I know my children's intellect and progress well enough to know that they are not a whit behind their age mates in public or any other kind of schooling, generally speaking.

But I just didn't feel like the state has any business testing my children because, A, I don't care to teach my children some of the things the state might want them to learn. In fact, I might want to teach them things contrary to what the state wants them to learn. So you might think, well, wait a minute, Steve.

It sounds like you're kind of not letting the state have their proper due here. Doesn't the Bible say, render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's? Yes, it does. But what are my children? Are they Caesar's or are they God's? Your answer to that will determine whether you're totally brainwashed by the dominant culture or whether you're thinking like a Christian.

Children are a gift from God given to their parents to be trained for God and released back to God. They're not a gift from the state to be trained for the state. I know that it's

very common for modern liberal media to talk as if that is the case, but it is not.

They belong to God, and God never gave the state any authority to educate children. If you don't know what the state's supposed to do, Paul tells us in Romans 13, and Peter tells us in 1 Peter chapter 2, God has authorized the state to punish criminals and to encourage decent and moral conduct. That's it.

Not to train anybody's children. And therefore, the state does not have authority under God to determine how children should be educated. But the parents do.

Now, parents can delegate that, I believe. Parents have authority. I believe there are times when a parent may feel like I'm not adequate to teach my child this or that subject that I think is very important for them to learn and may send them to an apprenticeship or may bring in a tutor or may sign them up in some particular classes they want them to be in.

That, I believe, is the parent's prerogative. That is the parent's authority over the child. They can delegate some of that if they have to.

But it's also the parent's authority to say, you know, the child doesn't have to learn in the years they're with me anything other than what I can teach them or what I want to teach them. Now, you might say, well, what about what if they get an inadequate education? What if some homeschooling parents are really negligent and don't teach them all the things they'd learn in public school? Well, the child may be way better off for not knowing some of those things. But if there is anything the child needs to know, let me give you a little testimony here.

I can't think of anything I learned in my first 12 years of education that is of any use to me now except how to read and how to do basic math enough to balance my checkbook, which I don't do very well anyway, even though I went to public school. Now, I'm not saying they didn't teach a lot of other subjects. I just can't think of anything they taught me that is of value to me.

I have learned a great deal that is of value to me, but I learned it at home. I learned it after I graduated from high school on my own. I could have gone into any trade I wanted to when I got out of high school, even though I haven't learned anything in high school that was of value.

Any child at age 18 or 20 can pursue an education and learn a trade or learn a skill even if they didn't learn very much in those years before. If you can train your kids through, you know, before they're 18 years old to do everything they need to do for their career, that's fine. But if you neglect that, that doesn't mean they're doomed to not be able to make a living or not have a satisfying career.

They can pursue it after they're done with the homeschooling. They can take, you know,

trade schools or whatever or go to college. I mean, there's all kinds of ways to do things.

I don't want my children to go to college for the same reason I don't want them to go to a public school. The only reason I want my children to go to college is if they are called by God to do some kind of profession that requires a college education, which you simply can't do without a college diploma. If that's what they're called to do, then they should go into college as part of what God has called them to do to get to where He wants them to go.

They should go through college like an arrow goes through the air to get to a target on the other side. But I, you know, in America, the assumption is everyone should get a college education or else they won't have job options open to them that others will have, etc., etc. I can't imagine anyone needing a college education in order to provide for their family food and raiment with which we are commanded to be content in Scripture.

And I would want my children to, even if they are fabulously, you know, productive and well-to-do later on in their lives, I would feel like I have cheated them terribly if I've imparted them a taste for wealth that makes them discontented with food and raiment. Because the Bible commands us to be content with food and raiment. God may give us more and God may prosper my children in whatever profession they choose or God leads them into more than He's prospered me.

That would be fine with me as long as I know that they would be content with little. And if they would be content with little, if I can impart that to them, I've imparted the one thing needful for their fulfillment and their happiness in life. Because the person who is content is richer than the person who has a lot of money and isn't content.

And so, we need to challenge the assumptions of our culture that tell us, you know, you need to get your children a state-of-the-art education, you know, comparable to that in the public schools and so forth. I frankly disagree. There's only one thing that we're really required to give our children in terms of education.

We read of it in Deuteronomy 6. It's a favorite Scripture for homeschoolers. Deuteronomy 6, verses 6 and 7. God said to Moses, in these words which I command you today, that is the commandments of God, shall be in your heart, you shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. Now, in other words, all day long in the ordinary activities of life, you shall be teaching your children the Word of God.

Now, this can be done... That doesn't mean you have to be talking the Scriptures every moment. It depends on, you know, the specifics of your daily life. But you need to be in a position at any time during the day, during any activity to bring in an awareness of what God's perspective is, of what God commands, of what God is pleased with in terms of

what they're doing.

And you can't do that if you're not there. Now, if children are sent off to Christian school, it may be that this is, again, a legitimate way that some Christian parents can delegate some of this to other parties. I do not condemn it.

I just don't think it's quite as good. Again, you've got some of the same problems of Christian school that you have in public school, but not all the same problems. And it is certainly a better situation.

But when parents realize that the one thing they've been commanded to teach their children is the Word of God, and they are to do this on an ongoing basis through the whole day in various activities of life, it's hard to know how you can do that without homeschooling. Now, I'm not saying you can't because, as I said, delegation of some of these things is a legitimate activity of those in authority. Authority can be delegated.

But some parents would never delegate the education of their children to others because they are so concerned that their children learn the things that matter most to them, and they're not sure they would get those from someone to whom the authority would be delegated. Ephesians 6, and verse 4, Paul says, And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Now, this can be done without homeschooling, but it can be done better with homeschooling, I think.

Now, I want to be cautious not to impose my opinions more than is due because there are some who believe that the proper training of children in the nurturing and admonition of the Lord must involve them in a fair degree of interaction with the outside world. And some might say that the interaction they receive in public school would be the level of interaction they'd like their children to be exposed to. And I do know some families whose children have been through public school and the parents have not lost their children to the world and so forth, but they are in the minority.

And most of the Christians I personally know who sent their children to public school have not found their children to walk with God once they came through that experience. There are exceptions. I do believe that part of raising children to be good Christians in the world which they must be when they come out of your care and are launched into their own lives outside, part of that does have to do with exposing them to the world beforehand.

But the question, it's a delicate question, how much exposure? Should they spend six hours a day, five days a week around worldly people? Is that safe exposure? You know, it might be relatively safe for some exceptional kids. But I'd like to suggest to you that it's too uncontrolled by the parent. You see, I want my children to be exposed to things in the world.

I want them to be exposed to them in a measure that I can have some control over and where I can have something, some influence on helping them to see it through God's perspective. I don't want my children to be unaware of what's in the world. I want them to be very much aware of what's in the world, but I want them to be exposed to it in measured amounts so that if I see it drawing them too much, I can pull back a little bit.

It's a delicate matter rearing a child. It's more like flying a helicopter than flying an airplane. I've never flown either, but my father-in-law has flown both.

And apparently, he says flying an airplane is as easy as driving a car. It just, you just get it up in the air and you just steer it a little bit and it stays pretty much course by its own momentum and all. But the helicopter, you have to have both hands going all the time, adjusting and correcting and everything, every little thing has to be adjusted every second.

And some people think raising children is like flying an airplane. You just get them launched and just a little minimal amount of steering in their life is going to keep them on the right course. And for some children, some very few children, that may be true.

But for most children, you've got to be regulating things on a regular basis. And if you just send your kids out of the home for six hours a day, you don't know if they're getting too much. And if you begin to feel like they are getting too much exposure to the world, you don't have a lot of control over pulling that back or adjusting that.

They're into a system that determines instead of you determining how much exposure and to what your children are going to have. Homeschooling, of course, is a great remedy to that problem. So, I mean, obviously, I'm a great advocate of homeschooling.

I want to not be more so than I'm capable of being because the Bible does not command homeschooling per se any more than it commands home birth. But both options are legitimate home-instead options. That Christians ought to at least consider very carefully before they just fall into the trap of following the dominant culture and sending it up to professionals to do this.

A third category I'd like to suggest is home business. Now, the Bible, again, doesn't command you to make your living at home. In fact, an awful lot of people to whom the Bible is written and addressed were slaves.

They didn't have the option of running a business from their home. They worked on someone else's plantation. Slavery was a huge factor in the lives of many of those to whom the Bible was written.

It'd be kind of meaningless to tell them, you know, you ought to be, you ought to have your own business at home. They didn't have any choice in the matter. And even if they did, it's not required that you have your own business.

Christians might look at this matter of self-employment self-sufficiently differently from one another at times. I think anyone who's thought about it knows there is a particular trade-off one has to consider when they're deciding, will I work in corporate America? Will I work for a boss? Will I be a cog in the wheel? Will I be an employee in a, you know, in another man's business on the one hand? Or will I strike out on my own and maybe strike out, you know? That's the trade-off is this. You work as a cog in the wheel and the wheel's pretty secure.

Your position is fairly secure. You're going to have benefits in all likelihood. And these things can be good.

These things can be worth having. But of course, you don't have the freedom and the flexibility that you would have if you're own business. You run your own business from home.

You've got freedom. You've got flexibility, but you've got, there's a trade-off there. You don't have the security.

You know, in a corporation, if you kind of, if you get sick for two weeks and have to miss work, you'll get, you'll draw your sick leave and the business, your job will still be there when you come back and it won't affect your salary or anything. But you have your own home business and you get sick for two weeks and you're kind of in trouble. Because no one else is doing it for you and there's no income and it can be, it can be risky.

And I guess it's that same trade-off that Americans are kind of in the balances about right now. How do we want our society? Do we want more liberty or more security? And I'm not saying the Bible tells you you must choose more liberty. That would be my choice.

I'd rather have the government and the system and everything else give me very little security and give me as much liberty as possible. But there are some who would like to have less liberty and more security. These are the ones who would feel more comfortable in slavery than I would.

But the Bible indicates in 1 Corinthians 7 that slavery is not wrong. Paul says, are you a slave? Care nothing about it. But he says, but if you have the opportunity to be free, use it.

He says, you've been bought with a price. Do not be the slave of men. Now, slavery is different than employment.

I realize that. What Paul said about not being a slave of men does not translate into a command to not be an employee. That's not the same thing.

What it does suggest, though, is that the person who has more of his options available,

more of his time at his own command, is able to serve God with greater flexibility than a man who doesn't. It's not a matter of good or evil anymore than being married or single is a matter of good or evil. It's the same kind of thing.

In fact, it's in the same chapter that's talking about that issue that Paul makes that comment. He says, you know, being married is good. Being single can be better.

Being a slave is okay. Being free can be better. It's not a matter of good or evil here.

It's not a matter of commands from God that you must do this or that. It's simply a matter of assessing the relative desirability of certain things. A person who runs his own family business is putting more at risk.

But then one of the distinctives of Christianity is it teaches us that if we're obeying God, we're not really at very great risk at all. Our security is in God. And that is why I don't really want the government to give me any security because the more they give me, the more it costs me in terms of liberties taken from me.

Give me the liberty to do what I believe God wants me to do without government interference and I'll leave it to God to give me the security. I don't need security from the state. And I feel the same way financially.

I'll tell you, not many people necessarily can have the opportunity to do what I do. And I feel very privileged. But when I got out of high school, I just had to make a career decision like anyone else.

And I said, I'm just going to be a free agent for God. That so happened that I was already teaching. And so there were opportunities for me to minister.

It wasn't like I was sitting around saying, well, someone better discover me because otherwise I'm going to starve here. But I mean, I was already teaching. And when I got out of high school, I started teaching more.

I had opportunities. But I never took a salary. So I never had any security.

I've never had any insurance. I've never had any salary. I've never had any guaranteed income.

And I don't want it because all the things that cause those things to come into your life also restrict your freedom. Now, is it wrong to restrict your freedom? Not necessarily. It's just not what I want.

I like the fact that if I want to, if I feel like God wants me to, I can pick up my family and we can move to another country if that's where God wants us to go. Or I can take off and do some ministry on the other side of the world or the other side of the country and I don't have to consult anybody but God. I like that.

Now, you don't have to do that. And a lot of people can't do that. The reason I can't is because I don't have anyone paying me anything.

So I don't have anyone to answer to about those things. If I was a professional, if I was even a salaried minister, I wouldn't have the same liberty. And maybe I'm just a rebel.

I'd say some could make a good case for that. But I'm not a rebel against God. I just want to be available to God.

And the more available I am to Him, the less security I have of a carnal sort available to me. The more of that carnal kind of security I would choose for myself, the less flexibility and availability I'd have on the other hand. It's a trade-off.

And there's no moral issues involved that I can see. If you choose to be self-employed and work from home, there's benefits in that. There are some other kinds of benefits from not doing it.

But in the Scripture, it does seem as if having a home-based business or a self-employment situation is something that is not commanded but recommended. Again, I already mentioned 1 Corinthians 7, 21 through 23, where Paul said, if you're a slave, don't worry about it. But if you can be free, do it.

Because you've been bought with a price by God. You're His servant. Try not to be encumbered by overmuch restrictions from man.

You've been bought with a price. You can look at those verses on your own if you want. I'm not going to turn there right now.

It's 1 Corinthians 7, 21 through 23. I'd like to look at a couple of the Proverbs. In Proverbs 24, verse 27, it says, Prepare your outside work, make it fit for yourself in the field, and afterward build your house.

Now, the field is considered to be the field of your acreage, where you're going to build your house. But get your work producing first. Before you seek the comfort and the security of your home, go out and get some kind of productivity going on there.

He's not saying it's necessary to work at home. It's just a suggestion that is kind of taken for granted that most people in that culture, most people did work their own land. And to get your own fields productive is a priority that is recommended.

In Proverbs 27, verses 23 through 27, this is the closest thing to a command to be a homesteader that I find in the scripture. Proverbs 27, 23 through 27 says, Be diligent to know the state of your flocks and attend your herds. For riches are not forever, nor does a crown endure to all generations.

When the hay is removed and the tender grass shows itself and the herbs of the

mountains are gathered in, the lambs will provide your clothing, the goats the price of a field. You can pay your property taxes with the goat milk. You shall have enough goat's milk for your food, for the food of your household and the nourishment of your maidservants.

Now, again, that's not a command to be a farmer, but it certainly is recommending that as a desirable thing to become as self-sufficient as you can. Have flocks, have goats, they'll provide food for you, they'll pay for the property taxes. Of course, they didn't have property taxes back then, but whatever he meant by the price of the field.

The idea here is that when hard times come, if you've got your own source of support for your family, you're going to be in a desirable position, not a morally superior position, just a desirable position. I'm not saying that Christians need to work from home, but there's a larger number of people these days than there was 20 years ago in the Christian church. Usually, they're the same people who are homeschooling and home birthing.

These home-based things tend to kind of cluster in the same families to a large degree, but many people have felt that in order to have the flexibility to serve God and be with their families more and so forth, that they'd like to be in a business that's home-based. To have the children involved in the business is not a bad idea. It's a great idea, as a matter of fact, if you can do it.

Now, I don't have a home-based business. I'm in the ministry. I don't have a business at all.

My wife raises goats and goat milk. She's teaching children how to do that and so forth, and they may not be goat herders when they grow up. They might not ever look at a goat when they grow up.

But one thing that I think parents do have an obligation to do, if they can, is to, when they turn their children loose, as it were, from their home to be in other homes, when they go out and get married and start their own home, the parents should have done all that they can to prepare their children to function as they will need to as adults. If they are sons, to pass a trade onto them if possible. If they're daughters, to teach them to be homemakers, including maybe some home-based things that can help produce for the family, like the Proverbs 31 woman.

A lot of people have said the Proverbs 31 woman was a realtor because she considered a field and she purchased it. She didn't purchase fields on a regular basis. She purchased one field to plant a vineyard for her family.

All the activities of the Proverbs 31 woman were home-based. She was bringing a second income into the family. There's nothing wrong with two-income families, as long as the

woman doesn't have to leave home to get a second income.

If she has to leave home and children, then there's some question as to what is valued more, the children or additional money. The children need a mother more than a family needs a second income. And I say that no matter how low the husband's income is, because very few husbands in this country have had incomes lower than mine.

And yet my wife has not been induced to go out and seek a second income outside the home because it's not our preference to do that. We'd rather cut back our standard of living as far as necessary to live within our means so that we don't have to have my wife go out and get work outside. However, home-based businesses can help supplement the income of otherwise single-income families.

Stay-at-home moms can be involved in businesses that are home-based. The Proverbs 31 woman, she made clothing. Notice she didn't go to the marketplace.

She sold it to the merchants who then took it to the marketplace. They came to her door and bought it from her. And she brought in a little extra money for the family.

Great. Nothing wrong with that. But the thing about a home-based business is if you have one and your children and your wife are involved in it, then you know that whatever else happens, your children will know how to do something.

It may not be what they choose to do for a living the rest of their lives, but they know how to do something that if they need to, they can fall back on it because they've done it while they're being raised at a home. I recommend it. I don't say the Bible commands it.

It does not. Another thing about home-instead could include home marriage. Now, I don't say this for any other reason than economical.

I mean, you don't have to have a home wedding in a home. But I just flew to Houston a couple of weeks ago to meet a man at his own wedding. I'd been in touch with him by telephone and letter for years.

A very godly man, medical student. He just graduated from medical school. He's now going to be... I guess he's going to a residency now.

But he was getting married a couple weeks ago and he flew me down, or a friend of his did, because he wanted to get to know me better. And in talking about the wedding plans, he was very... Well, he's strapped for finance. He's got a huge school debt and so forth.

But the church he attended, one of the larger churches in Houston, charged a thousand dollars just to use their building and didn't even provide a minister. They just... And he was a member of the church. Here, he's a young man in debt to his school because he's

becoming a doctor.

He wants to be a medical missionary. And he's a member of this church. And they charge him a thousand bucks to use the sanctuary to get married in.

Not even the sanctuary, just a little chapel. And he looked for other places to get married. But in Houston, there just wasn't any place to go.

I said, well, have you considered a home? Chris and I got married in a Grange Hall. We had too many guests to do in a home. But sometimes, because of the elaborate, you know, things that people want to have in a wedding or the number of people they want to have, a home just won't do.

But I think that it's another one of the things we need to question our dominant culture about. The assumption is you need to spend thousands of dollars on a wedding and have it really fancy with all kinds of trimmings and fancy stuff. A friend of ours who used to be in our community abandoned, came from a very wealthy family.

And her sister was told by her unsaved parents, her unsaved sister was getting married. And her unsaved parents told her, we'll give you a choice. We'll either give you \$50,000 for a wedding gift or we'll put on a \$50,000 wedding.

She chose the wedding. I knew that'd create some groans here. Many of us could put \$50,000 for better use than that.

But it's just the mentality of the wedding is there. I mean, there's so much show. There's so much impression being given.

The relatives and the community has to be impressed by the dresses and by the money that was spent on the flowers and all that stuff. And it'd be really wise for Christians to consider whether that's really a godly way to spend that much money. Maybe it is.

I mean, certainly marriage is honorable and maybe that's one way of showing how much we honor marriage. But is it really biblical? Or is that just something our culture has decided? You know, you don't honor the wedding couple unless you spend thousands of bucks on them. Kristen and I spent, I think, a total of \$10 getting married.

And her father was a millionaire and would have paid anything. If we'd gotten... If we wanted a big wedding, he was a millionaire. He would have paid it.

He was glad we were getting married. And he's such a humble man. I sure respect him.

He came to our wedding. We got married in this Grange Hall. I wasn't wearing a suit.

She was wearing a wedding dress we borrowed from a friend who'd gotten married a few months earlier. We borrowed it for free. There were no paid anything.

We didn't buy flowers or cake or anything like that. It was a potluck. And it was great.

And here, Kristen's dad, he's, you know, CEO in a Silicon Valley electronics firm, multi-millionaire. And he shows up and his friends, you know, who are of his class, you know, the people he rubbed shoulders with in his business, they come to his daughter's wedding. And here her husband has hair longer than his shoulders and not dressed up.

And they're in this Grange Hall, which is about the most unornate kind of building you'll find anywhere. And not a dime was spent by my father-in-law because we didn't ask him to. I spent the 10 bucks to rent the Grange Hall.

Now, I want to tell you something. I don't think you need to do it that way. I don't think a lot of people necessarily want to do it that way.

But I'd like to suggest to you this. I certainly admire the Christian humility of my father-in-law. Not of myself.

I mean, it was just my kind of wedding. It was just my style. But it wasn't his style.

And it wasn't his, you know, I mean, here are all his friends. He's a wealthy man. A man's daughter's wedding and how much, you know, glitz and stuff is there, has a lot to do with making the man seem like he's, you know, wealthy and so forth as he really was.

But he just didn't bat an eye about it. He's a Christian man. He's humble.

He didn't feel like the wedding had to be all that fancy and expensive. And I think that it doesn't have to be. If you've got more money than you got brains or money than you know what to do with, and you want to spend thousands of dollars on a wedding, that's between you and God.

That's a stewardship issue for Christians to consider. But I think that a married couple, a young couple, could probably put better use to five to ten thousand dollars in the first year of their marriage than to have it just shot in one big gala, which is to impress probably people more than anything. Now, I'm sure that some people would object to my suggesting that it's just to impress people.

Maybe there is some other reason for it. I can't think of what it is. But I also don't want anyone to think that I'm upset with people who spend money on weddings.

I just think that Christians ought to not just flow with whatever is common in the culture and ought to look at things through distinctly Christian eyes. Is this how God wants this money spent? Is this glorifying to God or is this glorifying a couple or glorifying the person who's paying the bills? I mean, who's been glorified in all this? What's it all for? Now, I leave it to, of course, individual Christians to make their own decisions about how they do this kind of thing. But all these things I'm suggesting is you can do a lot of things

differently than the culture does.

And it can be much more homey. It can be much more family if it's not left to the professionals. There was the wedding I went to in Houston.

It was a very nice wedding. It wasn't real expensive because there just wasn't a lot of money after they rented the chapel to put into it. But I was there for the rehearsal because they had me speaking there.

And there was a wedding coordinator saying, OK, you go here, you go there. He says this, he says that. The woman, she was a professional the church hired.

The guy who was getting married and the girl didn't even know the woman. But she's making all the decisions of how the wedding is going to be choreographed. And I thought, how much simpler it would be if the couple themselves and their parents or something had more of this involvement rather than some paid professional they've never even met.

Now, maybe I've just got strange views and I admit that. But I'd like people to at least consider these things. Home birth, home education, home business, home weddings.

These are things that are options open to us that are more affirming of the family structure, I think, than our culture prefers. Our culture goes for the professional, glitzy, institutionalized stuff. And I don't know that that's always, certainly isn't the only choice available to us and it may not always be the best.

A couple other things that I've done. I want to talk a little bit about home church. Home church means different things to different people.

My friend Wes, before we met him, had home church with his family for five years. And that just meant his family and him because they tried other churches and didn't find anything they liked. So he just met with his family.

That's not what I'm thinking of when I call, that's not what I'm calling home church. Home church just means having church in a home. Now that can be done if the church is small enough to meet in a home.

It doesn't have to meet in a home. The Bible doesn't indicate that churches always met in homes. In the New Testament times, Paul met in the school of Tyrannus, apparently a rented facility in Ephesus, because I guess there were too many Christians to meet in a home there.

In Jerusalem, there were way too many Christians to meet in a home. So they met in rooms of the temple and so forth that were available to them. Many times, churches simply are too big to meet in homes.

But even some very large churches, like the church in Rome, met in homes rather than in rented buildings. I'm not going to suggest that meeting in homes is better than meeting anywhere else. And it certainly isn't mandated.

But a lot of people never think about it. I got a phone call about a week ago on my program, or maybe a week and a half, from a lady whose church had kicked out the pastor. And she and her husband looked into it and found out that the reasons were very trivial.

And the pastor was a good man. The church was bad. And she was wondering what they could do.

A lot of people in the church were upset that the guy got kicked out, because he was a good pastor, good preacher, good man. I said, well, have you just thought about getting together with him and these families in a home on Sundays? And she says, well, we were thinking about it, but we weren't sure if that'd be okay. So again, it's just a matter of saying, it's okay.

It's not commanded. You can meet in a bigger church. I do.

On Sunday morning, I meet in a church much too large to meet in a home. But it still is a home church in a way. I was just thinking about this.

I just found out last Sunday that yet another home church has merged into our group. I guess, Steve, you probably know about that just recently. Our group started as a home church, and Steve Basaraba's home.

Then our home church, Morgan, came and moved in. And then Mark Anderson's home church moved in. And now there's a fourth home church that's now merged with it.

We don't meet in a home anymore, and it's impossible to do so. It's not necessary to do so. But there are many people I know, not sitting in this room, but people who will listen to this tape, who are in cities where they've tried many, many churches, big churches, institutional churches, and they just don't find anything there that they want their children to be raised in.

And sometimes all they know is one other family or two or three that have a heart after God like their own, and they almost feel obliged to go to some big institutional church. It's not required. Several families meeting in a home is an entirely normative biblical pattern.

It's not the only biblical pattern, but it's a normative one. In the Church of Rome, which must have had a great number of members, because Rome was a very large city, of course, and probably had proportionately more Christians than smaller cities would have, we find in Romans 16, there apparently were about six or five, maybe five home

churches where the Christians met. It's not certain that all of these were home churches.

Some we know were. In Romans 16, 5, Paul says, Likewise, greet the church that is in their house. He means Priscilla and Aquila.

There was a church meeting in their house in Rome, but they were not the only ones. There were other home churches there. I would say probably home churches.

There are several times when he speaks, for example, in verse 14, Greet Asynchritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Petrobis, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them. Also, verse 15, Meet Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympus, and all the saints who are with them. Now, notice he gives several names and the saints who are with them.

There's these people and there's some saints with them. And then there's these people over here and there's some saints with them. And then there's these saints over here in the home of Priscilla and Aquila.

The impression, I think, is given that probably these were all different home groups. We know at least one was Priscilla and Aquila's home. In verse 10, it says, Greet Apelles, approved in Christ.

Greet those who are of the house of Aristobulus. Could be just the family. Could be a house church.

Likewise, the next verse, Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of the house of Narcissus. Who are in the Lord.

Again, maybe just the family referred to as the house of Narcissus. This could be a reference to a group of Christians meeting there in the home. Philemon, according to Philemon, verse 2, had a church in his home.

He was in Colossae. There were other churches in homes in Colossae, according to Colossians chapter 4. It would appear, I don't know if I can find it here real quickly because I don't have... Here it is. In verse 15, Colossians 4.15, Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and Nymphos and the church that is in his house.

Now, that's in Colossae. And Philemon was also in Colossae and he had a church in his house. So, sometimes a church in a town might have more people than could fit in one house.

So, they'd have several house churches. And in some cases, they might give up meeting in house all together and rent a hall or do something else. All of that is legitimate biblical options.

But having a church in the home is a growing option. It's growing in its recognized

legitimacy in our day and age because so many Christians have been pretty disillusioned with institutional churches. And the ones, the remnant that want to come out of there often don't have the money to buy a big church building or there's not enough of them to require one.

And so, they may meet in homes and that's entirely reasonable. But, of course, in many cases, all the cases we mentioned, probably the churches outgrew the home. And that's what happened in this valley with the group that was in St. Bosphorus and outgrew it.

So, got into bigger buildings. Nothing wrong with that. But there's also nothing wrong with churching at home as long as it doesn't reflect a refusal to fellowship with other Christians and an isolationism that is unhealthy.

One other thing about home instead I'd like to suggest to you and then I'm done is home outreach or home-based outreach. There's a general feeling in the modern evangelical churches that one of the really neat things for young people from Christian homes to do is to go off onto the mission field and short-term missions. There's Youth with a Mission.

There's, what's it, Teen Mania. There's a lot of organizations that mobilize zealous Christian young people to go out and do short-term missions. Some of this can be good for the young people.

Some of it can even be good for the people they go to. I have been teaching in YWAM for 18 years and I'm fairly familiar with that organization. I also have some not-so-intimate knowledge of some of the other groups that do this kind of thing.

And I've gone on short-term missions overseas since I was 19 years old without organizations. I just went and preached overseas. First time was in Germany when I was 19.

I've been doing it ever since. Not real frequently now. But having done all that and looking back through, I think, more mature and biblical eyes, I'd have to say this.

That concept of outreach does not have a biblical basis. What concept? The concept of taking these young kids right out of school, late teens, early 20s, and sending them overseas to be missionaries. In the New Testament, you never find a child sent out as a missionary except for Timothy, a youth who was under the direct oversight of a senior missionary, the Apostle Paul.

The most missionary-sending church we know of in the New Testament is the Church of Antioch, the home church of Paul and Barnabas and Silas. Actually, Silas was from Jerusalem originally, but he came and relocated to Antioch. That church, the great missionary hub of the Gentile outreach, sent out, as far as we know, three missionaries, Paul, Barnabas, and Silas.

We read of no more. They didn't send out the youngest, most zealous people. They sent out men who were leaders in the church, old, tried and true men, because these men had to go out and represent Christ.

And I will say this. I do not say this as a criticism of YWAM per se, but YWAM is the organization I've been more knowledgeable of than some of the others. I'm sure it's true of all other organizations that send out youth also.

When you send out a bunch of youth, some of them do a lot of good. Some of them don't. Some of them are not ambassadors for Christ.

And for that reason, you'll find that an organization like YWAM overseas or with the churches, churches either love them or they hate them. There are churches that love YWAM because they come and they do wonderful things and evangelize their town and so forth. And there's other churches that have had very bad experiences.

Again, I'm not saying that as critical of YWAM. I'm just saying that as critical of a philosophy in general, of sending out young, untried people as missionaries. Instead of these young people being missionaries at home, you see, a plane ticket doesn't make a person a missionary.

If a person isn't ministering where they are, there's no reason they'll be ministering more by sending them overseas. And if they don't minister at home, let me put it this way, if it doesn't work at home, don't export it. And I'll tell you what, a lot of people go into YWAM and these other organizations, some of them are not even saved when they go in.

I know because I hear them testify. I got saved during my DTS. Well, you came to a missionary training school to be a short-term missionary and you weren't even saved.

I wonder how many come that way and don't get saved in their DTS. And they go out as missionaries still unsaved. I've known a few that I suspect are in that category.

Now, having said that, I want to make it very clear that God uses people who are willing to be used. And there's some of the best Christian men and women I've known. Some of them are in YWAM and some of them are just great missionaries.

And they probably would have been great missionaries whether they were in YWAM or not. And some of them got in there pretty young. I mean, they were just people with exceptional callings.

But a lot of people send their kids to YWAM or these organizations because they think it's going to be good for the kids. And maybe it will be. Some kids have a great experience with God in there.

But in the New Testament, they didn't send out missionaries for the therapeutic benefit

to the missionary. They didn't send out missionaries to the pagans so that the missionary could grow up, so that the missionary could get saved, so that the missionary could have a spiritual experience. They sent out men who already were proven, effective, gifted preachers.

And they sent them out knowing they could trust them not to bring a reproach on Christ. And these men are not going to backslide out there. And some youths do.

How can young people minister at home? Well, there's a couple of things I'd like to... A couple of scriptures I'd like to show you. And I'm out of time for this. In Isaiah chapter 58, this isn't about young people ministering at home.

It's about people ministering at home, people old or young. And Isaiah 58 and verse 7, this is that chapter about God's chosen fast. He says, these people were fasting and saying, God, why aren't you listening? We're fasting and pouring out our souls to you and you're not answering.

He says, well, because you're fasting from food, but you're not fasting from evil. You're abstaining from food, but you're not abstaining from sin. And the fast that I have chosen is not that you abstain from food, but you abstain from wickedness.

And among the things He said they should do in order to really make a positive impression on God, I found in verses 6 and 7, is this not the fast I've chosen to lose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out when you see the naked that you cover them and not hide yourself from your own flesh? In other words, a ministry of mercy and hospitality is something that God considers to be marks of true godliness. It's a genuine needed ministry. A home-based ministry can bring people in.

Not all homes can do this equally well, depending on their size and other circumstances. But it is possible to have an outreach to people who are in need, the poor and so forth, by bringing them into your home. The Bible recommends it.

We have 1 Corinthians 16, also as an example of what I'm talking about here. 1 Corinthians 16, Paul said, I urge you, brethren, you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia and that they have devoted themselves. The King James says they've addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.

The word ministry means service. They've addicted themselves to serving the saints. Who has? The household of Stephanas.

Not Stephanas the preacher, but his household, his family. They have addicted themselves to serving the body of Christ. They have a family ministry.

They have a household-oriented, household-based ministry. I don't know what service they were providing. They may have taken in traveling ministers.

They may have taken in the poor, like Isaiah 58 says. Or they may have, you know, they may have invited neighbors over or non-Christians and evangelized them over dinner. Who knows what they did? But it's very clear that the Bible indicates that ministry and outreach can be done as a family thing from the home.

And I'm not going to suggest too many specifics because I think if you are called to any particular ministry, it'll be God who tells you the specifics. There's so many different ways people can minister. But I do think that Christians need to be thinking at least along the lines of basing much of their activities in and through and out of the home that our general dominant culture doesn't consider doing at home.

It's always going out and doing it out there and taking the family away from the home and separated people and atomizing the family, the individuals out of the family. And while the things I've been suggesting are not commanded, they are in keeping with general principles of encouraging the home identity and the family identity. Some people may be called to some of these things and not others.

It really is something I just commend to your own conscience to decide. But again, I give these out simply as encouragement to people to consider something different, something more based upon the concerns that God has revealed in the Scripture for Christian families rather than just going along with what the dominant culture says. Home birth, home education, home business, home marriage, home church, home outreach, all of these things are things for which there is biblical precedent, but there's not biblical command.

And therefore, we cannot make moral issues of them. We cannot require that people do them. We cannot judge people for not doing them.

But we can recommend them and say there is biblical precedent and in many cases, biblical normativeness about some of these things. And I believe that as Christians adopt more of this kind of an attitude of centering much more of the ministry and activities around the home and the family, that it will strengthen homes in ways that our culture does not see homes strengthened very much in our day. So that's my reason for going over these concerns.