

# AN ENVIRONMENT FOR GROWTH

Sermon by Donald Townsley

## INTRODUCTION

1. ENVIRONMENT means: the conditions under which one lives.
2. When a child is born, the parents generally try to create a healthy environment in which the child can grow into maturity.
3. Many of us have seen home environment which destroys the child physically, emotionally and spiritually.
  - (1) Many children are abused physically and sexually in the home.
  - (2) Many are scarred emotionally by verbal abuse and by divorce and constant criticism.
4. Parents have a responsibility to make the home an environment in which children can grow into maturity without being scarred for life emotionally, physically or spiritually.
5. Every time a person is baptized into Christ, he becomes a newborn child of God -- Gal. 3: 26 - 27; John 3:3 - 5; I Tim. 3:15; Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19
6. Sometimes the local church provides such a poor environment in which a child of God can grow into maturity.

## I. THERE MUST BE AN ATMOSPHERE OF LOVE

1. A warm spirit of brotherly love is needed in the local church.

(1) *"Let brotherly love continue"* -- Heb. 13:1

(2) *"Love the brotherhood"* -- I Pet. 2:17

(3) *"Love as brethren:"* -- I Pet. 3: 8

(4) *"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love"* -- Rom. 12:10

(5) *"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another"* -- I Thess. 4:9

(6) *"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:"* -- I Pet. 1:22

(7) II Pet. 1: 7 -- *"brotherly kindness"*

2. This is the love all Christians should cherish for each other as members of the family of God -- John 13: 34 - 35

3. We see this love demonstrated in the early church.

(1) The church in Jerusalem -- Acts 2: 44 - 45; 4:32; 12:5; I John 3:18

4. Our brethren, like ourselves, made in the image of God, and heirs of eternal life, and beneficiaries of the blood of Christ -- Acts 20:28; I Cor. 6:20

5. Our LOVE should reach out to each other with all of the emotional thrust of which the heart is capable -- I Cor. 12: 26

6. We ALL are faced with infirmity, temptations, pressed with the care of life, frustrated and defeated in many of our fondest hopes; we are mortal seeking that better life beyond this veil of tears-- Tit. 1:2
7. For a local church to succeed, and have an environment where Christians can grow, there must be brotherly love.
8. Young Christians cannot grow in an atmosphere where there is "biting and devouring" one another -- Gal. 5:15
9. All kinds of things can cause brotherly love to fail:
  - (1) Differences of opinion -- Rom. 14: 22
  - (2) Selfish ambition -- 2 Tim. 3:2; Luke 9:23
  - (3) Desire for personal prestige
  - (4) Concentrate on self -- Phil. 2:3
  - (5) Spiritual pride -- Rom. 12:3
  - (6) Vain glory -- Phil. 2:3
  - (7) An awareness of sins of others more than consciousness of our own sins -- I John 1:8; Matt. 7: 1 - 5
  - (8) Peevishness -- I Cor. 13:5
  - (9) Gossip -- Prov. 16: 28
  - (10) Lying -- Eph. 4: 25

## II. PROPER SPIRITUAL FOOD

1. The food which is necessary for growth is the Word of God -- I Pet. 2: 1- 2; Heb. 5: 12 - 14; Acts 20:32
2. The diet of Spiritual food must be geared to the needs of the person.
  - (1) Milk for the babes and Meat for the more mature -- Heb . 5: 13 - 14
3. Through the teaching of the Word, the child of God can learn how to cleanse his life from sin -- Psa. 119:9; John 15:3; Tit. 2: 11 - 12; Col. 3: 5, 9
4. Through the teaching of the Word the Christian is prevented from committing sin -- Psa. 119: 11
  - (1) Looking and lusting -- Matt. 5:28; I Tim. 2:22; I Pet. 2:11
5. Through the teaching of the Word the Christian is comforted in time of affliction -- Psa. 119: 49 -50; Rom. 15:4; I Thess. 4:18
6. Through the Word we learn to hate every false way -- Psa. 119: 104; Rom. 12:9
  - (1) We have to see the sinfulness of doctrinal error -- I Tim. 1:3; 4:6
7. Through the Word the Christian finds direction in life -- Psa. 119: 105, 130
8. Recognizing how important the Word of God is to the development of a child of God, we can see the need for a well-rounded program of Bible teaching in the local church.
9. A church which allows its pulpits to be filled with lessons not solidly grounded in the Word of God are creating an environment in which the babes in Christ will starve to death spiritually.

10. A child of God must be rooted and grounded in the truth that he might not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine -- Eph. 4:14

(1) The differences between the Lord's church and denominationalism.

(2) The differences between faithful and liberal churches.

(3) We must warn about false doctrines -- Matt. 15:9; Col. 2: 9

(4) We must teach on worldliness -- I John 2: 15 - 17; Rom. 12:2

(5) We must teach on attendance -- Heb. 10:25

### III. THERE MUST BE DISCIPLINE

1. Every home must have discipline

(1) Instructive -- Col. 1: 28

2. Every local church must have Discipline -- I Cor. 5: 1- 5; II Thess. 3:6

3. None of us are going to live so perfectly that we will never need to be rebuked -- Luke 17: 3 - 4; Matt. 18: 15 - 17; Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 4:2; James 5: 19 - 20

4. We need to create an environment in the church in which a brother can be rebuked for his sins, and restored to his Lord, without being driven away from the local church.

5. Brethren who are caught up in sin must be rebuked and called to repentance.

6. In so doing we must communicate to them our genuine love for their soul as a reason for our rebuke -- Gal. 6:1; 2 Cor. 2: 7 - 8

7. We should have no spirit of vengeance or hatred -- Rom. 12:19

8. We must have an atmosphere in which any Christian can come forward and confess his sins, knowing that the Lord will forgive him and the brethren will have a greater respect for him because of his honesty in dealing with his sins.

(1) We don't need to make private sins public.

### IV. THERE MUST BE EXERCISE

1. Children in the home must have physical exercise.

2. Christians need to exercise in godliness -- I Tim. 4: 7 - 8

3. Through exercise in godliness, one learns to distinguish truth and error -- Heb. 5: 12 - 14

4. We need to provide opportunities in the local church for Christians to exercise themselves in godliness.

5. Men must have opportunities to:

(1) Pray

(2) Lead Singing

(3) Preach

(4) Make announcements

(5) Teach

(6) Develop into elders

6. We need training classes which give young men an opportunity to train:

(1) To make announcements

(2) To lead prayer

(3) To wait on the Table

(4) To preach

(5) To teach

7. We need training classes for young women. . .

#### CONCLUSION

1. Our faithfulness to Christ demands that we make the Local church such that a newborn Christian will have an environment in which he can grow into maturity.
2. Whatever changes are necessary to create such an environment must be made.
3. LOVE, FOOD, DISCIPLINE and EXERCISE

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