

# A Holy Home

## 2:14-16

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*“Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then, to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce,’ says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘and him who covers his garment with wrong,’ says the Lord of hosts. ‘So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously” (2:14-16).*

“Home!” The very word conjures up ideas of the most pleasant sort—rest, security, safety, unconditional love, and full acceptance. The importance of one’s home is universally admitted. From famed agnostic to devout Christian, all emphatically concur in the home’s importance and its connection to society’s welfare and one’s personal well-being.

The present condition of the American home is precarious. Today the importance of the home is emphasized more than at any other time, yet the development of the home has the lowest priority at any time in history!

The problems with the modern home surely disturb God more than we can imagine. He designed the home to be a beautiful unit where basic needs are met and love is found. When sin invades, it destroys this God-given beauty.

Such happened in Israel and was the basis for the words of Malachi 2:14-16. Israel was carelessly destroying the beauty of God’s home. With subtle moves, Israel had modified God’s home and their redesign fell far short of divine approval! Instead of joy and security, the “homes” of Malachi 1 brought shame and sorrow. God’s prophet was sent to correct this tragedy. From Malachi’s words, we are able to find a great lesson regarding the home’s holiness.

### HALLMARKS OF A “HOLY” HOME

In 2:14-16, we can notice four traits of a home that reverences God and follows His design. One trait is *its establishment*—“by covenant” (2:14b). Malachi pointed out that the home is founded upon a covenant made between the husband, the wife, and God. These three join together and vow that their union will produce a “holy” home (cf. Proverbs 2:17).

A “holy” home begins before the marriage ceremony. Prior to the wedding vows, the man and the woman must understand the sacredness of the union they are forming and be willing to obey God’s commands. They should form a union that will produce a home like Abraham’s. To the honor of Abraham’s home God said, “I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the Lord may bring upon

Abraham what He has spoken about him" (Genesis 18:19).

Many enter marriage today with no regard to God's design. Consequently, their priorities are not those which stress spirituality and righteousness. They pursue self instead of God. This was evident in Malachi's day. Because the Israelites did not follow God, they were incapable of establishing "holy" homes. Because their homes did not fear God, it was impossible for them to produce "holy" children (2:15).

An old fable applies here. It was a source of much trouble to some fish to see the lobsters swimming backward instead of forward. They called a meeting and determined to open a swimming school for the lobsters. A number of young lobsters attended because the fish gravely argued that if they began with the young they would learn to swim correctly. At first the lobsters did well, but when they returned home and saw Mom and Dad swimming in the old way, they forgot the lessons. This is true with our children. Many are taught well in Bible classes but return to an "unholy" home environment, and there the lesson is lost! Some parents think they can drop the kids off at Bible class and pick them up afterwards, and the children will develop holiness. But they are sadly mistaken. Bible classes are only as effective as parents allow them to be!

If the home does not admit its covenant with God (Proverbs 2:17), it will never be a "holy" home producing "holy" children! Parents, be honest as you ask, "Does my home recognize and submit to the covenant union with God?"

D. L. Moody told of a great benefit of a "holy" home. A family learned that its son had an incurable illness. The husband came home one day to find his wife crying. She said, "I'm afraid our son will not live out this day." The father went to the sickroom and saw his son's condition. He asked him, "Do you know that you're not going to live?" The little fellow said, "Is this death that I feel? Will I die today?" "Yes, my son, you can't live out this day." The boy smiled and said, "Father, I shall be with Jesus tonight, won't I?" At that, the father began to cry. The little son, seeing the tears, said, "Don't cry for me. I'll go to Jesus and tell Him that ever since I can remember you have prayed for me." Moody commented, "I have three children. If God should take them, I

would rather have them take such a message home to Him than to have the wealth of the whole world." Parents, is your home a "holy" home where the children know that Mom and Dad are praying for each (cf. Job 1:5).

A little boy sat on his father's knee and asked, "Pa, is your soul insured?" "Why do you ask?" the father replied. The boy answered, "I heard Uncle George say that you had your home insured and your life insured, but he didn't believe you had thought of your soul. He was afraid that you would lose it. Won't you get it insured right away?" A "holy" home acknowledges God as its foundation. How tragic that many act responsibly in securing the material necessities for the home yet ignore the most important—the spiritual!

A second trait of a "holy" home is *its regulation*—"a remnant of the Spirit" (2:15). Verse 15 is vague, but it probably indicates that those who seek God's favor will use Scripture to control their homes. If Scripture is not used, the abuses seen by Malachi will also appear in our homes.

Malachi spoke to those who refused to follow God's will. Because they rejected His will, their homes were "ungodly." Wise parents will utilize God's Word to rule their homes (cf. Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21).

The following poem helps to emphasize the urgency of parents using Scripture to direct their homes.

### In Daddy's Steps

I watched him playing 'round my door  
My neighbor's little boy of four.  
I wondered why a child would choose  
To wear his dad's old worn out shoes.

I saw him try with all his might  
To make the laces snug and tight.  
I smiled to see him walk and then  
He'd only step right out again.

I heard him say, his voice was glad,  
"I want to be just like my dad!"  
I hoped his dad his steps would choose  
Safe for his son to wear his shoes.

And then a shout and a cry of joy,  
A "Hello, Dad!" and a "Hi-ya, boy!"  
They walked along in measured stride,  
Each face aglow with love and pride.

"What have you done today, my lad?"  
"I tried to wear your old shoes. Dad.

They're big, but when I'm a man  
I'll wear your shoes, I know I can!"

They paused and stood there hand in hand.  
He saw his son's tracks in the sand.  
His words, a prayer, came back to me,  
"Lord, let my steps lead him to Thee!"

The third trait is *its enemy*—"treachery" (2:14-16). In Malachi's day, the home was being destroyed because family members were acting from selfish desires. No regard was given for others within the family unit. Because no one controlled "self," all were acting "treacherously."

Of all the problems facing the modern family, this evil presents the greatest danger. In some of today's families, we see individuals acting without the slightest regard for one another. A self-centered husband and wife forget they are "one" with each other. Because of this forgetfulness, a chasm is developed which is never bridged. Self-centered parents want to be free of their children so they can pursue selfish goals. They look for ways to shirk their parenting duties and thus neglect their charges. Self-centered children think their mom and dad "owe" them everything and become angry when they have to do even the most basic tasks. These selfish children scoff at the idea of sacrificing to help their parents. Courtesy to them is a foreign concept. Respect is absent!

This enemy of selfishness is strong and successful. It destroyed the families of Malachi 2 and continues to do so today. The home has a duty to guard against this enemy and teach its members the importance of denying self and serving others (cf. Luke 9:23; Philippians 2:4; Romans 15:2).

Fourth is *its harmony*—"take heed to your spirits" (2:15, 16). Because selfishness had corrupted the Israelite homes, Malachi urged the nation to vigilance. Uncontrolled selfishness will lead us to bitterness, anger, and rebellion. The watchword we are to follow is "take heed!"

Fathers, Malachi urges you to help your home be a place of joy. Every father has a duty to make sure his home is situated on the "hilltop of cheerfulness and serenity."

Mothers, Malachi's message constrains you to watch how you set the atmosphere of your home. In a church graveyard, a tombstone with this message inscribed by a husband of sixty years says, "She always made our home happy."

What better memorial can follow a wife and mother who strives to nurture a "holy" home. Children, this Old Testament prophet tells you how to react to parental guidance. Do not follow the folly of rebellion (cf. Proverbs 13:1; 15:5). Children have just as an important role in the harmony of the home as parents. The following poem helps to illustrate this truth.

### What Daddy Did

Dad tried his best, when I was young  
To fix it in my mind,  
That "as the twig is bent  
So is the tree inclined."  
And when he'd lay me 'cross his knee  
On punishment intent.  
I used to cry, "Say, Dad, look out!  
Or else I'll grow up all bent."  
And when he'd say, "Come on, young man,  
And weed this onion bed,"  
Just when I'd planned a fishin' trip  
With Jimmy Jones instead.  
I used to scowl until my face  
Was black as black could be;  
And mutter, "When I grow up  
I'll be humpback, you'll see."  
But years have come and have gone,  
With many a care and trouble.  
With many a load that for a time  
Has nearly bent me double.  
But I've always sprung back again  
Before it was too late.  
For though he made me bend a bit,  
'Twas Dad who made me straight!

The blessings of a "holy" home come when all the members in that home cooperate. This fosters a harmony that reflects God's holiness.

### IMPERATIVES FOR A "HOLY" HOME

From these verses in Malachi 2, we see two great lessons emerge. These two thoughts will assist all of us to develop and maintain a "holy" home.

First, God deserves a place in our homes. He is to be respected and honored because He is an intricate part of the home's beginning. Family members should recognize the "covenant vow" (2:14) that has united the home. As they respect that vow, they will do all they can to honor God. The husband and wife will be careful to respect God's will in marriage. The parents and children will be careful to respect His will in family discipline. If families will make sure that God has a prominent place in their homes, then holiness will be seen.

Second, harmony must be the goal of families. To achieve this goal we all must “take heed” (2:16). There will be a willing recognition of parental authority over all who are at home. There will be a strong effort of all family members to be sensitive toward other’s feelings and failures. A harmony will exist that will bind family members together in a strong unit.

### **CONCLUSION**

Occasionally, you hear families discussing the inevitability of death. Often the conversation

turns to what certain ones are to inherit. The greatest inheritance a parent can give a child is a “holy” home! The most cherished item you can will to another upon your death is the precious memory of a “holy” home!

Malachi spoke to families whose homes were being destroyed. The prophet tried to correct the damage by calling the nation to incorporate these four hallmarks of a “holy” home. His call is appropriate to families today. May all possess these hallmarks of a “holy” home!

—John Kachelman

### ***Exhortations to Husbands (and Wives Too)! (Malachi 2:14-16)***

1. Consider your wife a companion by covenant (2:14).
2. Use the Scriptures to guide your marriage (2:15a).
3. Control yourself so you will show a godly spirit toward your wife (2:15, 16).
4. Regard divorce as God does (2:16).
5. Realize that your treatment of your spouse affects God’s acceptance of your worship (2:13; 1 Peter 3:7).

### ***Perils of Marriage (Malachi 2:14-16)***

1. Treacherous behavior / attitudes (2:14-16).
2. Failure to consider one an equal “companion” (2:14b).
3. Exile of God’s Spirit to instruct and guide (2:15a).
4. A selfish spirit (2:15, 16).
5. Divorce (2:16).

### ***Why God Hates Divorce (Malachi 2:16)***

1. It is the fruit of treacherous deeds (2:14).
2. It destroys the covenant promise of two people (2:14).
3. It is prompted by Satan’s spirit and not God’s Spirit (2:15; note verse 16—“covers garment with violence”).
4. It destroys God’s design (2:14).

### ***Why Honor Your Spouse? (Malachi 2:15)***

God’s complaint against the nation of Israel was that they failed to honor the wife of their youth. Why is honoring your spouse so important?

1. Because you have established a covenant of marriage with one another and God is the witness (2:14).
2. Because you are two companions and this mandates honoring each other (2:14b).
3. Because doing so will show you have a remnant of the Spirit (2:15a).
4. Because it indicates that you are taking heed to your spirit (2:15b).
5. Because it will cause your worship to be accepted with favor from God (2:13).

### ***A Fulfilled Marriage (Malachi 2:13-17)***

1. It begins with God as a witness (2:14) and is by His authority and approval.
2. It endures a long time. Its enduring quality is underscored as one remains with the “wife of your youth” (2:14).
3. It endears as the bond is strengthened by each other’s caring emotions and gentle dealings (2:14, 15b).
4. It is a revered union that is made to work because it is a holy covenant (2:14).
5. It is devoted to the God who ordained it and thus is careful to maintain holiness (2:13, 15a).
6. It is rewarded when God is pleased with its function (2:17).