

How to Have a Happier Home



Mealtimes will never be the same

What is the greatest weakness in most families? According to Dr. James H. Bossard, a former professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania who spent 40 years probing what he called “neglected areas of family life,” it is the way parents talk in front of their children.

After studying extensive recordings of table talk, he wrote, “I had no idea I would discover a real pattern in the [mealtime] conversation of families. I just wanted to learn what families talked about, but to my amazement, I have found that family after family had definite, consistent conversational habits, and that the critical pattern was the most prevalent.

“These families rarely had a good word to say about anyone. They

carped continuously about friends, relatives, neighbors—almost every aspect of their lives, from the lines of people in the supermarket to the stupidity of their bosses.

“This constant negative family atmosphere had a disastrous effect on the children, because a high percentage of these families’ children were antisocial and unpopular. Moreover, this pattern of hostility many times turned to quarreling amongst them. Without fail, their meals were a round of insults and bickering. The children absorbed that pattern, and it caused the children trouble.

“Long ago,” Dr. Bossard continued, “a great teacher pointed out that what comes out of the mouth is a great deal more important than that which goes into it.” He also said, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

If our innermost self is superficial,

egotistical, and mean, all those qualities are going to permeate our words as they flow from our lips. But words flowing from a heart filled with love will have a magnetic quality that will draw others to us. When the heart is filled with divine love, we don't need to try to put compassion or tenderness into our conversation. All our words will have a savor and a power that comes from an inner depth.

So the root of the problem isn't actually the tongue, but the heart. Words convey what's in the heart and our heart's character. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings

forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things."

There is no way under the sun to change the quality of our words except to change the spirit from which those words flow. There has to be a change of heart.

When we fill our hearts with goodness, kindness, and gentleness, we will soon find our words to be conductors of love and consideration rather than criticism, making us a greater influence for good in the lives of those nearest and dearest to us. ●

Start the day off right



The surest way to help our loved ones get off to a great start each day is by starting the day with love. Easier said than done, we might say, when we're just waking up ourselves! But if we give it a try, we'll be pleasantly surprised. Here is how...

- Don't just eat breakfast together in silence, staring at a plate, the newspaper, or the back of the cereal box. Engage in positive conversation together. Be grateful for the wonderful things that are going to happen that day.
- Read and reflect on something positive, and you and your loved ones will be ready for any challenge the day may bring your way.
- Those few minutes together in the morning are also a great time to give encouragement. Tell her how nice she looks. Tell him you're sure he's going to do great in school. Give a parting hug that conveys, "I can't wait to be with you again!"

When we start the day with love, love will carry us through the day. ●