



Session 5 – Family Worship

1. Family Worship = “instruction of the Lord”

- a. We are commanded by Paul in Eph. 6:4 to “bring [children] up” through discipline, and through “instruction of the Lord”, and this is to occur at all times (Deut. 6:7–9).
- b. A father’s spiritual headship is *most* evident in leading his family to the Word and in prayer, and to the worship of God immediately (directly).
- c. Family worship is the family gathered around Christ at **ordained** times for prayer, Scripture reading & instruction, and song. Family devotion to the Word, prayer and worship marks a Christian family to indeed be *Christian*.
- d. "Another part of family religion is the worshipping of God. This is so necessary to keep alive and to maintain a sense of God and religion upon the minds of men, that, where it is neglected, I do not see how any family can in reason be esteemed a family of Christians, or indeed to have any religion at all." (Archibald Hall, *Gospel Worship*, 497)
- e. Demonstrated in the OT as a father’s leadership in faithfulness to Torah, to prayers, and to feasts (keeping Passover, etc.). It was clearly commanded for fathers to assume this sacred responsibility (Deut. 6 & 11!).
- f. Demonstrated in the NT as households being brought to Christ (see book of Acts).
- g. "*Family religion was the principal design of the institution of families; and therefore we are indispensably bound to observe it. Can it be thought that God would unite a number of immortal creatures together, in the most intimate bonds, in this world, without any reference to their future state? Were families made for this world only, or for the next? If for the next, then religion must be maintained in them, and those who omit this duty live in families in direct opposition to the first end of their institution.*" (Hall, 499–500).

- h. Family devotion/religion provides the concrete basis on which all other religious expression and duty might be built. A child's being taught and instructed in the Lord in the home provides all necessary rudiments and understanding for spiritual blessing in the church.

2. ***"Pastor for a little flock"***

- a. Family worship is a *father's* sacred duty to lead and to maintain.
- b. The puritans: father as pastor to his "little flock": "*Every family is a little nursery to the church*" (William Gurnall, 1:164), "*The families of Christians should be little churches... a church in the house is the nursery in which the trees of righteousness are reared, and afterwards are planted in the courts of our God.*" (Matthew Henry, 251).
- c. The weight of a father's voice in prayer, in reading/teaching Scripture, in singing to the Lord must be felt in the home if children are to be properly instructed for public service and worship.
- d. This is true in marriage as well and is likely the focus of 1 Cor. 14:33–35, and Paul's instruction that wives should "***ask their husbands at home.***"
- e. "But what if my wife is more confident with spiritual things, knows more than me?"
 - i. A husband, regardless of a wife's greater knowledge of Scripture or maturity in the Lord, has been granted by God the pilot's seat in leading both her and the children to Christ.
 - ii. For a wife/mother to lead family devotion and prayer, and the reading of Scripture and making application to the children's souls and struggles, this sends a confusing and unbiblical message.
 - iii. Translation: I abdicate my God-given responsibility and calling since I don't ***feel*** confident.
- f. In the long run, the message sent by a woman's spiritual leadership is that the man has rejected his role in favor for selfish purposes, in this case, giving into the feelings of inadequacy and insecurity instead of trusting the Lord like a man and leading, even through weakness and lack of experience.

- g. God has not given wife/mother the role to take direct control and headship over spiritual nurture of family.
- h. Archibald described the lack of family worship and instruction as "criminal neglect", and the cause of so much of the "*decay of godliness in the hearts and houses of such as call themselves by the name of the Lord*" (Hall, 505–506).
- i. Brothers: we must take the LION'S share of prayer and biblical instruction in the home. Our voices should be loud and clear in the Word, in song and in prayer.

3. The Method:

a. Content:

- i. The saving Gospel
 - 1. The 4 gospels and the story of our Savior (incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension and return).
- ii. The way of salvation
 - 1. Faith and repentance
 - 2. Baptism
 - a. Thoughts on baptizing children: when? What to look for?
- iii. The Savior's way
 - 1. 10 commandments
 - 2. Beatitudes
- iv. Truths for life (doctrine is awesome!)
 - 1. Apostles' Creed
 - 2. Catechism (Ref. Baptist catechism)
- v. Special focus on wisdom from Proverbs (written for young people)
- vi. Hymns and songs
- vii. Prayer
 - 1. The Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9–13)

b. Times:

- i. Commit to: morning, meals, main devotion, nighttime, and the Lord's Day.

1. Morning: teaching children to seek the Lord privately/personally in devotions. How to read the Bible, how to journal, how to pray, etc.
2. Meals: prayer of thanksgiving (*sincere* and not rote) for all meals, particularly when together and eating.
3. Main devotion: best time might vary depending on family, but after dinner seems a prime slot for most.
 - a. Little bit of Scripture
 - i. Directly from Bible, or from a Family Worship devotional
 - b. Instruction & discussion
 - i. Explain text, context, meaning.
 - ii. Share how this text might apply to children and to family.
 - iii. Share how you might live in the light of the text (including stories of repentance, lessons learned, etc.)
 - c. Prayer
 - i. Keep a list and intercede for family, friends, church, gospel witness, mission/church plant, etc.
 - ii. Take special note when the Lord answers prayer!
 - d. Song (hymns, Doxology)
4. Nighttime: prayer, testimony, a song before bed.
5. The Lord's Day
 - a. Sabbath-keeping and the family. The Lord's Day is set apart for the family to especially focus on the things of God:
 - i. *"The Sabbath is to sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days, and spending the time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except what is taken up in the works of necessity and mercy."* (Q. 66, Keach's Catechism)

- b. Church is highpoint of family worship. As fathers, we do as David: "***How I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.***" (Psa. 42:4)
- c. Explaining sermons and sacraments to children. Our children must not be ignorant about any single aspect of the worship of God and the fellowship of believers.
- d. Showing the way of submission to the Lord through being attentive and active in worship (singing heartfully, taking notes during sermons, removing hat in worship service, etc.)
- e. Reviewing with children what they've learned in Sunday School, etc.
- f. Calling our children to full and sincere participation: memorization of Scripture or catechism for children's classes, taking notes during sermons, bringing Bibles to church, etc.

4. Be Diligent

- a. "***You shall teach them diligently...***" (Deut. 6:7) Brothers: lock it in. Don't move an inch. Make it so that the kids expect it, and whenever it might be missed, they take notice!
- b. *This is the way.* This kind of locked-in consistency reflects well the commandments given to fathers in Deut. 6 and 11.
- c. *Start early:* "*Would young parents begin with God, and use themselves to family worship from the first, they would be likely to proceed with ease and comfort; whereas, a neglect at the first discourages a future attempt, and the longer the duty has been neglected, the more backward people usually are to return to it. It is therefore necessary that young parents should dedicate their houses to the Lord, by setting up his worship in them, as soon as they commence masters of families; and having begun in the Spirit, let them not end in the flesh; but go forward in the ways of God, until they appear before him in Zion*" (Hall, 506-507).
- d. *Get something going.* Take steps **this** week. Don't aim for reading through Bible in a year but start with achievable/sustainable/age appropriate worship, then BUILD.

- e. Keep going. We are building for the long-term, “**line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little.**” (Isa. 28:10).
- i. Faith and endurance are essential. There are times ahead when you will wonder, “are they even listening? Do they get anything?”
 - ii. Beware of “*short-lived convictions and feverish fits of devotion when guilt or zeal overcomes inertia, but fails to result in consistency.*” (Terry Johnson, *Marriage and Family*, 118)
 - iii. If you fall off the horse, repent and get back on it. This is the way.
- f. Beware of busy-ness.
- i. Archibald: Beware of the “*multiplicity of worldly affairs, and inordinate regards to worldly good*” (Hall, 507). Seeking the Lord will require the devoting of time to making it happen. Work, children's sports, social commitments, these things can crowd out the schedule of any family to make meaningful time for the Lord.
 - ii. “*The hurries of business can be no good excuse for this neglect... is there not as much reason for your taking care of their immortal spirits as of their perishing bodies? Ought you not to be as regardful, and as laborious for their comfortable subsistence in eternity, as in time? Nay, is not your obligation to family religion as much stronger as an immortal spirit is more important than a machine of animated clay?*” (Hall, 507).

ASSIGNMENT: Duties of Parents, J.C. Ryle

- Read this book through this course – then answer two questions (with some length and specificity, *involving wife*), and then meet with an older, mature Christian father to discuss:
 1. What is the present health and state of my fatherhood?
 2. What are the specific actions the Lord is commanding me to grow as a father?