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DEVELOPING THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF FAMILY
WORSHIP AT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH
OF MADISON, INDIANA

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DEVELOPING THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF FAMILY

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OF MADISON, INDIANA

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PREFACE

I would like to express heartfelt thanks for so many who have supported me through the course of this project. First, I thank God for my wife, Laurie, along with our three children: Clay, Nate, and Erin. Laurie has faithfully supported me during this project as she has in every endeavor I have ever undertaken. The moments we have spent around our own table reading, praying, and singing are treasures that cannot be measured.

Second, I want to thank the members of Calvary Baptist Church. The love and grace shown to me during this project by our congregation has been humbling and encouraging. I especially thank the men of our congregation. Studying Scripture and praying together with them has helped me to grow as a husband and a father. I am blessed to serve such a fine group of people.

Third, I thank the Southern Seminary community. I especially thank my faculty supervisor Donald S. Whitney without whose assistance this project could not have been completed.

Finally, I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. By his grace I have completed this project. I submit it for the good of his people and the glory of his name.

Robert Michael Hamby

Madison, Indiana

May 2012

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop the spiritual discipline of family worship at Calvary Baptist Church of Madison, Indiana.

Goals

Four goals served as the standard by which this project was evaluated. The first goal was to increase the frequency and/or the quality of family worship in the homes of the members of Calvary Baptist Church of Madison. This increase involved a more devoted and a more consistent practice among those already engaged in family worship. Also, this goal involved establishing the discipline within families that have not previously engaged in family worship. Thus, the first goal sought to measure both the establishment and the improvement of family worship as a spiritual discipline in the target group.

The second goal was to increase each husband and father's level of leadership in family worship. While it was important to note the circumstances under which mothers or other persons should lead family worship, a goal of this project was to stress the importance of fathers in the leadership of family worship. This increase occurred by virtue of encouraging some fathers to lead family worship who had never led such activities before, while other men became more consistent in their leadership of

the discipline. Furthermore, all married men were encouraged to lead in family worship, even those who had no children or whose children were grown.

The third goal was to encourage the use of each of the primary elements of family worship. This project argued that family worship is best when it includes Scripture reading, Psalm or hymn singing, and praying. Certainly, the exercise of any of these three elements is helpful and is to be encouraged, but the use of all three is best. Those who are new to the discipline were instructed to use all three elements from the beginning. Those who had previously led family worship without some or all of these elements were encouraged to adapt the use of all three.

The fourth goal was personal. My hope was to grow personally in the leadership of family worship in my own home. It was my desire to lead family worship more faithfully and more earnestly. I aimed to conduct family worship on a daily basis incorporating all of the essential elements. My goal was to conduct family worship with a spirit appropriate to the nature of the exercise. My goal was not only to grow as a spiritual leader within my own family, but also as an example before our congregation in the discipline of family worship.

Ministry Context

Calvary Baptist Church is located in Madison, Indiana, the county seat as well as the largest city in Jefferson County, Indiana. Centrally located between three major cities (Louisville, Kentucky; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Indianapolis, Indiana), Madison sits on the banks of the Ohio River. Established in the early 1800s by pioneers, the city of Madison is proud of its heritage. The city website boasts,

The entire downtown . . . is on the National Historic Register. In 2006, the Secretary of the Interior presented the City [sic] with the designation of National Historical Landmark District. The city has been recognized as one of a “Dozen Distinguished Destinations” in America in 2001 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Ladies Home Journal has called us “the prettiest little town in the Midwest.”¹

The historical heritage of Madison is an important element of the ethos of the town and of the mosaic of our ministry context.

Madison may be described as a small Midwestern town. The population of Jefferson County in 2008 was 32,830.² In 2008, the population of the city was 12,716, which was a 5.9 percent increase from the year 2000.³ The population of both the city and the county are relevant to the ministry context of the church. The modest size and the moderate growth rates limit the growth potential of the church. The central location of the church in the community, however, does increase its growth potential. The church is well positioned for ministry within Madison and within the whole of Jefferson County.

The religious composition of the community is interesting. Among those identifying themselves with religious congregations, only 15.9 percent identify with Southern Baptist Churches. A larger percentage, 23.5 percent, identifies with the American Baptists. Another 17.6 percent identify with Catholicism. Perhaps most significantly, only 51.85 percent of all residents affiliate with any religious

¹“The City of Madison, Indiana: History” [on-line]; accessed 29 January 2010; available from <http://www.madison-in.gov/history.php>; Internet.

²“Jefferson County, Indiana” [on-line]; accessed 1 February 2010; available from http://www.city-data/county/Jefferson_County-IN.html; Internet.

³“Madison, Indiana” [on-line]; accessed 29 January 2010; available from <http://www.city-data/city/Madison-Indiana.html>; Internet.

congregation.⁴ Thus, nearly one-half of the population does not identify with any religious congregation.

Significantly, within the Madison population, 21.6 percent of the population holds a Bachelor's degree or higher.⁵ Of course, there are several public elementary schools in the community, as well as two public high schools. Also, there is a Catholic School and a newly founded Christian Academy. Hanover College, located within Jefferson County, is important to the community's identity. Though small, the college is quite prestigious academically. With a rapidly growing enrollment and a newly built facility, Ivy Tech Community College has a growing influence in the community.

Information pertaining to marriage is pertinent for understanding the ministry context of Calvary Baptist Church. Currently, 13.8 percent of the population of Madison is divorced. Another 1.5 percent is separated. 53.9 percent of currently married individuals include those who have been divorced and who are remarried. Another 5.8 percent of the city population is living with an unmarried partner.⁶ This demographic information reflects the importance of family ministry in the ministry context of Calvary Baptist Church of Madison.

The congregation is not immune to the pain of divorce or to the challenges of remarriage. Several members of the church are divorced or remarried. A women's Sunday School class includes several divorced ladies. The presence of divorced members in the congregation is a reminder of the importance of family ministry.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

Curiously, no similar class for men exists. While the women's class is regularly attended by nearly twenty ladies, there are no men to constitute a comparable class. The absence of a men's class is an indication of the need within the church to strengthen ministry to men.

Calvary Baptist Church itself has a relatively brief and exciting history. The church began as a Southern Baptist church plant in 1959. The church officially constituted in 1962 with a membership of 44 people. Some 50 years later, a few of the original members are still active in the church body which now consists of about 150 active members with an average worship attendance of about 160. The church, having itself begun as a church plant, sponsored three missions in the surrounding area within the first seven years of its existence.

The church building has always been important to the congregation. Having begun in a house, the church did not constitute until construction was completed on its first building. This church building was destroyed on April 3, 1974, by a tornado that devastated the city. The congregation endured this hardship with resolve, meeting in schools before ultimately rebuilding. The newly constructed building included a Sunday school wing that remains in use today. After adding another educational wing at a later time, in 1996, the church constructed a new 400-seat sanctuary that is serving the church very well at the present time. The previous sanctuary now serves as the fellowship hall. These facilities, along with an outdoor shelter house, constitute the current physical properties.

The history of the church may be understood best by considering its most prominent pastors. Byron Lutz served as the first pastor of the church from 1960-1963.

Thomas Raisor served as pastor from 1971-1976. John Hamilton ministered from 1979-1987. Clyde Angel was the pastor from 1991-2000 and Devin Hudson from 2001-2004. There were others, but these served the longest, and they wielded the most influence. Also, it should be noted that professors from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary have often served in interim capacities.⁷

Conversations with church members reveal a wide variety of both doctrinal and methodological emphases among these pastors. No less than three of these prominent pastors left the church while embroiled in some sort of controversy. These controversies range in character from moral failure to doctrinal or methodological disagreement and have had a significant shaping influence upon the congregation. While the church has had difficulty sustaining an ongoing and consistent ministry effort due to pastoral turnover, many helpful and positive ministries occurred as well.

My ministry began in the spring of 2007. Of course, I had aspirations of leading the church to dynamic numerical and spiritual growth. Learning the history of the church, however, led me to believe that the church was in serious need of a faithful and a steady approach to ministry. Devin Hudson's ministry of about three years in the early part of this decade had been followed by one of only ten months. It was after this brief tenure, immediately prior to my arrival, that several younger families left the congregation out of apparent discouragement with the direction of the church.

The departure of these families created an obvious gap in the demographic character of the church. Seniors abound within the congregation. Babies and young

⁷"A Brief History of Calvary Baptist Church of Madison, Indiana" [on-line]; accessed 29 January 2010; available from <http://cbcmadison.com/church-history/>; Internet.

children are numerous, also. Teenagers and their parents, however, have been scarce. Young families promise to fill this void in the future. Nevertheless, if demographic gaps are to be avoided in the future, consistent leadership and family ministry are required.

Over the past three years, I have sought to develop healthy relationships in the church, while focusing my ministry on the essential elements of preaching, prayer, and personal ministry. Integral to this effort has been our pastoral staff with whom I have also sought to develop strong relationships. Our Music Minister, Andy Williams, was called by the church shortly after I arrived. We have forged a strong friendship, and we enjoy laboring in ministry together.

William's approach to the music ministry might be described as simple and blended. Our worship gatherings emphasize congregational singing, and they usually include both traditional and contemporary hymns. He incorporates the use of a praise team and a choir on a seasonal basis. Special ensembles and soloists are occasionally employed. Though conflict pertaining to music ministry has occurred in the past, our church currently enjoys tremendous unity and fruitfulness in the area of music.

After the departure of a staff member early in my ministry, the church added the role of Student Pastor to William's music ministry duties. It was at this time that our Children's Pastor, Tony Kummer, added the role of Associate Pastor. His ministry has been of particular importance to our congregation. His efforts to create positive and helpful environments for children have been blessed. Wednesday night activities, Vacation Bible School, and Upward Soccer are important programs in the life of our church.

Upward Soccer has become an important part of our congregational identity. We have conducted an Upward Soccer league for four years. In our second year, our league became the largest children's soccer league in Madison with over 150 boys and girls participating. While the immediate impact of Upward in terms of conversions has not been evident, the overall impact of the program has been positive. Many members of the church participate in the Upward effort. Our members gladly serve in a wide range of capacities including preparing the grounds, serving refreshments, and coaching teams. We have found the soccer fields to be a positive environment for getting to know many families from our community. Additionally, many children hear the gospel each week during devotional times, and many families hear the gospel at the Awards Night which concludes the season.

Another important development in the life of our church over the past few years has been a missions partnership to Haiti. Though the church has supported the Cooperative Program faithfully, it was not actively involved in a consistent short-term missions partnership. In the providence of God, we were introduced to Harvest Field Ministries, and we have established a short-term partnership with them.

An initial trip to Haiti focused on dental ministry. The second trip involved many more participants, and it resulted in a spike of interest in short-term trips. Our third short-term trip was delayed by the catastrophic earthquake that struck Haiti in January, 2010. Though this disaster was a set back to our efforts, it has only served to enhance the interest and the involvement of our church in efforts to minister to the Haitian people. An increasing passion for involvement in missions at Calvary Baptist Church of Madison is something we celebrate.

We have made an effort to increase the overall health of the church by recovering the practice of biblical church discipline. The membership of the church was quite disorganized upon my arrival. We have brought much order to our roll already, and we plan to continue the effort in the years to come. By making efforts at contacting the people on our rolls, we have discovered many who have joined other churches. We have realized that we are unable to find many more. To date, we have removed more than two hundred names from our roll, and we are in the process of trying to recover others. Along the way, we have preached and taught the importance of meaningful church membership.

The effort to recover meaningful membership highlights the most important focus of our ministry: the preaching and the teaching of the Bible. The Sunday morning worship gatherings are integral to our life together as a church. The preaching of the Holy Scripture is the central act of our corporate worship. Every effort is made to preach expositional sermons, usually working through a particular book of the Bible. Additionally, our Sunday School ministry is devoted to teaching Scripture for all age groups. A small counseling ministry has been established, which is an extension of the ministry of the Word through Calvary Baptist Church.

Recently, our church has been engaged in the development of a small-group ministry. Small groups meet in various homes throughout the week. Many young families have responded positively to this ministry. While the effort to establish small groups is in the early stages, it appears that this kind of ministry has much potential. Within these group contexts, we have discovered an apparent hunger among many in our congregation for the kind of community and the kind of spirituality that small groups can

provide. Small group ministry has made a significant impact upon our church, especially among several young families within our congregation.

The future of Calvary Baptist Church of Madison presents many challenges and promises many rewards. How can our congregation best be served? What are ways to promote spiritual growth and to equip our members to live faithfully in our own city? The future demands that we take our responsibility to disciple families and children seriously. As each generation gives way to another, nothing is more important than claiming a new generation for Christ. In order to achieve this in our own cultural context, this project advanced the development of the spiritual discipline of family worship at Calvary Baptist Church of Madison, Indiana.

Rationale

Psalm 78 stresses the importance of God's people providing spiritual instruction to the coming generations, "so that they should set their hope in God" (Ps 78:7). Instructing future generations is one of the most important priorities of God's people. Reaching the coming generations for Christ is a priority for many, but opinions may vary as to the best methods and the best approaches for achieving this goal. The spiritual discipline of family worship is one important means of instructing children spiritually and of reaching the coming generations.

Often, spirituality is conceived as an entirely personal journey. Individualistic conceptions of spirituality are more consistent with a postmodern worldview than with a biblical one. Consistent biblical spirituality will take passages like Psalm 78 seriously, passages which emphasize the urgency to relate spiritual truth to children. Biblical spirituality is personal. Yet, it is familial, also. Efforts to recover biblical spirituality

must not neglect the family. Of course, personal disciplines are essential and efforts to recover them biblically are to be applauded. Family disciplines, including family worship, are just as essential, however, and great effort must be made to recover them as well.

The primacy of individualistic spirituality in the culture is not lost upon Evangelicals. Efforts to recover the corporate nature of spirituality are being advanced. This can be seen in efforts to reclaim the importance of the local church and the importance of the family. Increasingly, a clarion call for the centrality of the local church in the believer's life is being heard. Similarly, voices are being lifted up in defense of the family and of the importance of family in the spiritual life of children. The development of family worship as a spiritual discipline can assist efforts to avoid the traps of individualistic spirituality.

Care must be taken to maintain a biblical balance between the family and the church. It would be faulty to exalt a need for one without the other. Family worship can serve as an important link between family and church. Individuals will first worship personally on a daily basis. Then families will gather for worship on a daily basis. Finally, families will gather with other families to worship weekly on the Lord's Day.

An emphasis on the importance of family worship is counter to the culture of self so obvious in Western culture. Cultural commentators have noted the erosion of the family as the institutional center of society. Extended adolescence, the increasing practice of cohabitation, rising divorce rates, and openness to gay marriage, all give evidence of a decline of appreciation for biblical models of family life in the culture at large. The erosion of the family, however, is not limited to the world outside the walls of

the church. These same cultural attitudes can be found within the church, even if they are not publicly advocated.

A return to the practice of family worship would be one important firewall to strengthen and protect the family. Families experience many helpful realities when they practice family worship biblically and happily. Children experience the joy of spending meaningful time with their fathers every day. Children see an image of father and mother together united in the praise of God. Every member of the family hears the Scriptures daily and experiences its sanctifying effect. Families experience joy. Around the table of family worship, cultural disrespect for the family is dealt a death blow, especially in the minds of children.

The Bible exhorts families, fathers particularly, to provide strong leadership for teaching children about the laws and wonders of God (Eph 6:4). Re-establishing family worship as a discipline within our congregation encourages men to assume their rightful place as spiritual leaders for their families. The need for discipling men is as great in our congregation as in any other. Several godly men can be found in our congregation, but many more are needed. Further, every man needs to continue to grow as a husband, as a father, and as a leader. Family worship promotes the spiritual growth of men within our congregation.

Convincing men to lead family worship is not promise to be an easy task. Yet, it is an imminently fruitful one. Many positive and helpful things occur when men engage in this one spiritual discipline. Any man who leads family worship in his home as was taught in this project will read a portion of Scripture, pray, sing praise, and spend some time with his family all on a daily basis. Further, if he teaches from a sound

catechism on a weekly basis, he is learning theology systematically himself. If a man did no more than that, he would be doing quite well in many respects. Yet, it is quite likely that the man who engages in family worship will be compelled to engage in many other spiritual disciplines as well.

Developing the discipline of family worship has tremendous potential for the spiritual development of children. Our church is committed to the evangelizing and the discipling of children. The commitment to children has usually been exemplified by a commitment to children's ministries carried out within the church. As important as these ministries are, it is essential to emphasize discipleship within the home. While the discipleship of children extends beyond the practice of family worship, family worship deserves the central place in terms of ministry to children. Every other effort to evangelize and to disciple children can be improved if family worship as a spiritual discipline is improved.

Children who attend the church on a regular basis are exposed to a certain amount of biblical teaching. They participate in three or four Bible studies per week. They are taught a great deal of biblical truth, and are encouraged to memorize many important Bible passages. The importance of these congregational discipleship opportunities should not be underestimated. Yet, they pale in comparison to the opportunities for discipleship that abound within the home. In addition to the many serendipitous opportunities parents have on a daily basis with their children, family worship provides a structured approach to spiritual instruction. Each time the family gathers for worship, the children learn biblical truth on a more personal basis directly

from their fathers. Additionally, the use of the catechism provides a systematic approach for teaching children biblical truth.

Finally, the development of family worship as a spiritual discipline serves to strengthen the church as a whole. Through the development of this one spiritual discipline, both men and women, young and old are instructed spiritually. Through this one spiritual discipline, the Bible is heard by many ears outside of the church walls. Through this one spiritual discipline, countless prayers are lifted up. Through this one spiritual discipline, if faithfully exercised, every family is encouraged toward unity and happiness.

It would be difficult to imagine anything other than an increase in spiritual strength within a church in which families gather to read the Scriptures, to pray, and to sing on a daily basis in their homes. A church filled with families who regularly worship God in their homes is strong and vibrant. Therefore, this project has served not only families, but the whole church as well.

Definitions and Limitations

What is family worship? James W. Alexander defines family worship as “the joint worship rendered to God by all the members of one household.”⁸ This simple definition expresses the essential nature of family worship. Catechisms and other resources certainly may assist the family in its worship; however, family worship involves all the members of a family gathering to worship God on a daily basis through Scripture reading, through prayer, and through song.

⁸James W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2002), 1.

A limitation of this project was that it was constrained to fifteen weeks in length. During that course of time, the frequency of family worship by participants was measured. The impact of family worship in terms of spiritual growth, however, was more difficult to measure. The overall spiritual impact of the project on the families involved will extend beyond the fifteen-week limitation.

A delimitation of the project pertained to the participants. Through the preaching period, participants were those who took part in a survey pool of members of the congregation who agreed to hear all five sermons. During the six-week class, the research involved each participant in the class. This entire class served as a focus group for the project.

Research Methodology

The project was conducted over the course of fifteen consecutive weeks. The project began with two weeks to prepare and to recruit participants in the project. The following five weeks were devoted to preaching on the topic of family worship in corporate worship gatherings. The next six weeks involved teaching about family worship during a six-week class on the subject. The final two weeks were a period of evaluation of the project.

The project sought to achieve four goals. The first goal of this project was to increase the practice of family worship at Calvary Baptist Church of Madison. At the beginning of both the preaching series and the class, a survey pool completed surveys to measure their commitment to family worship as a practice. A select pool of about twenty families served as the pool for the preaching series, while every participant in the class was involved in the survey pool for the class. After the project, participants completed

the same surveys. The results of both surveys were then compared. The survey sought to measure any increase in the actual practice of family worship among those surveyed.

The second goal of this project was to increase the leadership of husbands/fathers in family worship. In order to achieve this goal, I sought to recruit fathers to the six-week class and to include sections in the study on the role of fathers in leading family worship. A portion of the survey sought to measure the leadership of fathers in family worship both prior to and after the project.

The third goal of the project was to use all three essential elements of family worship with the members of Calvary Baptist Church of Madison, Indiana. Prior to and after the project, participants completed surveys on the topic of family worship. These surveys included questions pertaining to the use of Scripture, of prayer, and of singing during family worship. I measured the use of each of the three elements both before and after the project.

The fourth and final goal of this project was for me to grow personally in the leadership of family worship in my own home. I firmly expect to practice what I preach and “to set the believers an example” of godliness (1 Tim 4:12). Though family worship was certainly an existing practice in our home, I recognized ample room for growth in my own leadership of this important spiritual discipline. I expected to learn more about family worship as practiced by previous generations, which would instruct and encourage me in the discipline. I chronicled my practice of family over the course of the project in a spiritual journal. This journal supplied information for measuring my own practice of family worship as a discipline. Additionally, I reported on my practice of family worship in regular pastor’s meetings.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to develop the spiritual discipline of family worship at Calvary Baptist Church of Madison, Indiana. The four goals of the project were to: increase the frequency and/or quality of family worship in the homes of church members, to increase the level of leadership of husbands and fathers in family worship, to encourage the use of the primary elements of family worship, and to grow personally in the leadership of family worship in my own home. This project aimed to strengthen the family life of the congregation, which exists in a community in which family life is a demonstrable weakness. Taking place over the course of fifteen weeks, the project involved a preaching series and a discipleship class both on the topic of family worship. Various surveys were used to measure the effectiveness of the project in achieving the stated goals and purpose.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT
FOR FAMILY WORSHIP

Introduction

Family worship is an essential element of biblical spirituality, and it is important to understand the biblical and theological foundations of family worship as a spiritual discipline. This chapter will examine important passages regarding the significance of family worship from both the Old and New Testaments. Special consideration will be given to the role of fathers in the spiritual leadership of the home. Also, the importance of family worship in the lives of certain biblical characters will be highlighted.

Significantly, one of the first commands that God gave to mankind relates to family worship. God blessed Adam and Eve and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28). This verse is rightly understood to support the idea that God intended to populate the earth through human reproduction in the context of marriage. God instituted families as the means by which humanity would flourish on the earth.

Yet, God’s design for families included more than simply filling the earth with people. God intended for families to be a locus of his worship from the very beginning. John Piper writes,

God's purpose in making marriage the place to have children was never merely to fill the earth with people, but to fill the earth with worshippers of the true God. One way for a marriage to fill the earth with worshippers of the true God is to procreate and bring children up in the Lord.¹

Thus, from the very beginning, God intended for marriage to be the place into which children were born and brought up to worship Him.

While the necessity and practice of family worship should be established, the primacy of congregational worship must not be forsaken. Nearly every glimpse of the early church at worship as recorded in the book of Acts is congregational worship.² The prominence of corporate worship in early Christian practice highlights that which David Clarkson observed regarding the tension between public and private worship. He argued,

We cannot suppose that all the posterity of Jacob would neglect the worship of God in their families; no doubt the faithful among them resolved with Joshua, 'I and my house will serve the Lord' [Nevertheless, God] prefers public worship before private. He loved all the dwellings of Jacob, wherein he was worshipped privately; but the gates of Zion he loved more than all the dwellings of Jacob, for there he was publicly worshiped.³

God's desire to be worshipped and glorified among the people he created is best fulfilled in the most public way possibly. Therefore, public worship is a primary means of fulfilling God's purpose on the earth, because through it God is worshipped openly among a multitude of people.

Nevertheless, the dichotomy between public and private worship need not be mutually exclusive. In fact, it is best for God's people to seek to worship God in every

¹John Piper, *Marriage is meant for making children . . . Disciples of Jesus*, pt. 1 [on-line]; accessed 9 September 2010; available from <http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/2007>; Internet.

²See Acts 4:31, 12:12, 13:44, 14:27, 15:30, and 20:17.

³David Clarkson, *Public Worship to Be Preferred before Private* [on-line]; accessed 25 July 2011; available from http://www.covenanter.org/DClarkson/clarkson_pubwor.html; Internet.

dimension of life. One confession of faith explains, “God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth, whether in private families daily, in secret by each individual, or solemnly in the public assemblies.”⁴ Thus, family worship, along with public and private worship, is at the heart of God’s purposes on earth. God’s purpose for humanity is to know and to worship the one true God. This worship is to be both personal and corporate. Individuals and groups of people alike are to worship God until “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:14). The worship of God shall fill the earth, however, not simply through individuals and larger groups of people, but also through families. Family worship is integral to the purpose of God to fill the earth with worshippers.

Personal and corporate worship require the development of certain disciplines. Family worship requires much the same. Bible reading and prayer, among other disciplines, are necessary for the worship of God personally. Preaching, congregational singing, and regular participation in the ordinances are essential to corporate worship. Similarly, Bible reading, singing, and prayer, are essential disciplines for family worship, along with other helpful activities such as catechizing. The same care devoted to personal and corporate disciplines must be given to the development of spiritual disciplines within the family.

Beyond the Garden of Eden, God continues to call families to worship him.

God’s call to Abraham included the priority of family worship:

The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his

⁴Peter Masters, *The Baptist Confession of Faith: Updated English with notes* (London: The Wakeman Trust, 2008), 38.

children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.” (Gen 18:17-19)

The call to family worship has always been at the heart of man’s covenant relationship with God. God chose Abraham “and the consequence of Abraham’s election includes his instructions to his household to observe ‘the way of the LORD.’”⁵ In keeping with the thrust of the Abrahamic covenant, the following pages are intended to lay a biblical and theological foundation for the advancement of family worship among a new generation of God’s people. Five important passages related to family worship will be considered: Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Joshua 24:14-15, Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:4, and Hebrews 11.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 is a critical passage of Scripture in relation to a variety of issues. It is significant in terms of the flow of biblical history. This passage is found in a historical context in which Moses reiterated the commands of God to Israel as they prepared to cross over the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Therefore, the words of Deuteronomy 6:1-9 are among the last he would speak to Israel. In this passage, Moses summarized the essence of the first table of the law of God; he highlighted the importance of maintaining the worship of God even as Israel conquered and settled the Promised Land. The passage is pertinent particularly for another reason as well.

⁵Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 223.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 establishes the family as a primary context in which the worship of God is to take place.

The Object of Worship

Yahweh alone is a worthy object of worship. Standing on the banks of the Jordan River, Moses forcefully reminded the nation of Israel that his words were those that “the LORD your God commanded me to teach you” (Deut 6:1). Israel must be careful to hear and to obey these words for they are words from the Lord. “Yahweh” (LORD) is the name by which God had revealed himself to Moses prior to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. When Moses asked how he should reply when the people ask who had sent him, “God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exod 3:14). John Frame comments, “So *the* name by which he wants his people especially to remember him forever, is Yahweh or Lord.”⁶ Moses was careful to remind Israel of the divine identity of the One to whom their worship was directed. God is not only the Creator, but He is the Deliverer and the eternally self-existent Covenant King. The worship of Israel was to be directed to Yahweh or the Lord.

The Nature of Worship

Worship is a holistic activity. Moses used the word “fear” to describe Israel’s relationship with the Lord. He wrote that God commanded him to teach Israel, “That you may fear the LORD your God” (Deut 6:2). Israel was to fear God. The word “fear” has

⁶John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 21. Emphasis original.

a wide range of usages in the Bible. It can be used to speak of “the emotion of fear, the intellectual anticipation of evil, reverence or awe, righteous behavior or piety, or formal religious worship.”⁷ Thus, the word “fear” richly conveys the expectation that Israel will worship the Lord with a reverent attitude, a righteous life, and religious ritual. Fearing God involves the whole person in every sphere of life.

Later, Moses would reiterate the warning that Israel should worship the Lord alone and should refuse to worship the false gods of the land. Moses warned, “You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples around you, for the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God” (Deut 6:14-15a). As the people of God enter a land filled with idolatrous worship, Israel must be most careful to worship Yahweh alone. Perhaps the people would be seduced by the false gods by the promise of material blessings. To caution against this temptation, Moses relayed a promise from Yahweh.

Yahweh explicitly promised to bless those who worship Him exclusively by faithfully keeping His commands. Moses called, “Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey” (Deut 6:3). Of course, care must be taken to avoid the errors and dangers of a prosperity gospel, which would focus merely on the material blessings of following the Lord. Nevertheless, proper emphasis must be given to the direct promise from God that all true blessings, temporal and eternal, are found in the exclusive worship of Yahweh.

⁷R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:399.

By this promise, God calls His people away from the temptation to bow before the idols of the nations in order to garner material blessings.

The Children of Worship

Moses connects his concern for the worship of the LORD to the succeeding generations of Israel. He wrote, “That you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son” (Deut 6:2). Israel must not be content that the Lord is worshipped in the current generation. The temptation to worship the false gods of the nations will be great “in the land to which you are going over” (Deut 6:1). For this reason, Israel must devote special attention to leading the rising generations to worship Yahweh alone.

The Heart of Worship

Moses memorably expressed the very essence of worship. He wrote, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:4-5). This verse includes both a clarification of the nature of God and a call to worship Him. In contrast to the many gods of the nations around them, Israel was instructed in the truth about the one supreme and eternal God. Yahweh, in His very being, is essentially united. God is one.

Perhaps above all in this passage, Israel was being called to worship the one God, Yahweh, internally as well as externally. When asked which was the most important commandment of the Law, Jesus replied by quoting from this passage. He answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:29-30). Why are so many words used to describe the kind of worship God commands? One author explains, “The accumulation of terms is used to express completeness. It is a dramatic way of emphasizing that loving God is a response of the entire person.”⁸ Jesus reiterated the ancient words of Moses: the greatest goal in life is to worship the one true and living God with every ounce of one’s being. Contemporary listeners, along with the audience of Jesus and ancient Israel, are called to worship Yahweh in the depth and fullness of their being.

The Context of Worship

In what context shall worship occur? Surely the worship of Yahweh was meant to occur in all places at all times, including the gathered community of God’s covenant people. Moses, however, emphasized one particular context of worship. He commanded,

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. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut 6:7-9)

Admittedly, this is not a text primarily about worship. Rather, the text is about daily life. God’s people were commanded to speak about the things of God to their children. The

⁸Ed Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1997), 143.

home is where children would first have their hearts turned toward God. Children would first learn about the God they should worship in their homes.

While much of this duty would be fulfilled through the simple routine of daily life, family worship can be seen as another implication of this text. One commentator notes,

The people were not to concern themselves only with their own attitudes toward the Lord. They were to concern themselves with impressing these attitudes on their children as well. The Israelites were to talk about God's commands always, whether at home or abroad.⁹

Everyday conversations may constitute the primary fulfillment of this command, but family worship can serve as a consistent discipline by which families read and discuss God's word intentionally as they worship God together in the home.

Thus, God has purposed from the very beginning that those who worship Him should give special attention to dedicate their homes to Him. The godly family is called to the one great task of man: the worship of Yahweh. Cultivating family worship is not merely another option for the practice of piety. Rather, family worship always has and always will lie at the heart of all true and acceptable spirituality.

Joshua 24:14-15

Joshua 24:14-15 presents a stirring call to the undiluted worship of Yahweh. The call is immensely compelling on its own terms, and it is made all the more compelling by virtue of the fact that it flows from the lips of Joshua. Joshua charged

⁹Earl S. Kalland, *Deuteronomy*, in vol. 3 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 66.

Israel to worship at the end of his time as their God-appointed leader. He was one who had exemplified zealous worship of God throughout his life. Joshua's passionate call to worship God culminated with an expression of personal commitment to family worship. Thus, Joshua demonstrated that family worship was a central dimension of his devotion to the Lord.

Joshua's call is all the more convincing because of Joshua's lifelong commitment to the Lord. Joshua had served faithfully under Moses as a military leader for Israel (Exod 17:9). He had personally heard the words Moses recorded in the book of God (Exod 17:14). He had accompanied Moses on Mount Sinai when he received the law of God (Exod 24:13). Joshua had been with Moses on the Mount when Aaron had fashioned the golden calf (Exod 32:17). Thus, he had not participated in Israel's worship of the false god. He had been one of the original spies into the Promised Land (Exod 32:16). Joshua, along with Caleb, had expressed faith that the land could be conquered even at the risk of his own life (Exod 14:10).¹⁰ He had led Israel across the Jordan River (Josh 3). He had led Israel to victory over Jericho (Josh 6). Joshua had commanded the sun to stand still in the victory over the Amorites (Josh 10:12-13). He became a writer of inspired Holy Scripture (Josh 24:26). Joshua, in fact, led Israel to serve the Lord "all his days" (Josh 24:31).

Joshua had lived before Israel as a mighty man of God. His charge to worship God and his commitment to do the same were not empty words. Joshua stood before Israel as one who knew God by personal experience and one who faithfully fulfilled the

¹⁰Frances A. Schaeffer, *Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 15-34.

call to worship all of his days. He was well positioned among the people to make a stirring call to faithful worship as they inhabited a new land filled with worship of false gods. Faithful worship, the godly Joshua would insist, certainly includes worship within the family.

The Nature of Worship

Joshua echoed the words of Moses when he began his charge with a call to “fear the LORD” (Josh 24:14). Again, the word “fear” is rich with meaning and pregnant with implications. Along with the idea of having a sense of awe before God, the word “fear” involves a call to worship the Lord with integrity in all of life. Joshua called Israel to a reverent attitude, a righteous life, and religious ritual as expressions of their devotion to Yahweh.

Joshua added another element to the idea of fear. He charged, “Fear the LORD and serve him” (Josh 24:14). The word “serve” carries a variety of meanings. It can mean “to do or make,” “to worship, obey,” or “to enslave.”¹¹ Joshua called Israel to express devotion to Yahweh by serving only him even in the midst of a polytheistic culture. The service they render to God should be that of happy submission as they work for him and obey him in all of life.

Joshua added to this call two words that express how Israel should carry out this fear and service of God. He called them to do so “in sincerity and in faithfulness” (Josh 24:14). The words sincerity and faithfulness convey the idea that Israel should worship God with authenticity and perseverance. As he had personally exemplified,

¹¹Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 2:639.

“Joshua’s exhortation is a passionate one that the people should be totally devoted – blameless – in their worship of their God.”¹²

The Exclusivity of Worship

Joshua earnestly called Israel to worship Yahweh alone. He exhorted, “Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD” (Josh 24:14). In the midst of nations who worshipped a vast array of false gods, “Joshua called the people to give undivided loyalty to the Lord.”¹³ Yahweh’s call for exclusive worship was as fundamental as the first commandment of the law. The Lord commanded, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me” (Deut 5:6-7). Joshua’s plea for undivided loyalty would not have sounded strange to the ears of Israel.

Nevertheless, Israel was falling prey to the temptation to worship the false gods. Though Israel should have been committed to the very first commandment, “We are shocked to learn, then, that it was necessary for Joshua to command the Israelites to ‘throw away the gods’ here at the end of his career as a political and spiritual leader.”¹⁴ Israel was surrounded by false gods. Despite the clarity of God’s commands and the

¹²David M. Howard, Jr., *Joshua*, The New American Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 435.

¹³Donald H. Madvig, *Joshua*, in vol. 3 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 368.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

warnings of Moses prior to Israel's crossing of the Jordan River, the influence of the worship of the pagan nations was great upon Israel.

The Conviction of Worship

Joshua's call to the exclusive worship of Yahweh stood in sharp contrast to the polytheism surrounding Israel. Whereas the pagan nations could simply embrace Yahweh by syncretism, "*Israel* was being asked to choose *its* loyalties, something pagan nations did not have to do because they could embrace all the gods."¹⁵ Joshua called Israel away from polytheistic and idolatrous practices to the unadulterated worship of Yahweh.

Joshua demanded, "And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell" (Josh 24:15a). Certainly, Joshua did not intend to legitimize the worship of pagan gods. He did intend to demand a clear determination of religious allegiance on behalf of Israel. In fact, Joshua insisted that the people declare their spiritual allegiance openly.

Joshua did not limit the choices or misrepresent the options when presenting his case to the people, because although God had chosen them, having called Abraham when he was still a worshiper of idols in Ur and having called the entire nation out of Egypt, the people nevertheless had to choose God themselves – intelligently, decisively, and willingly – if their choice was to be of real value.¹⁶

¹⁵Howard, *Joshua*, 436. Emphasis original.

¹⁶James Montgomery Boice, *Joshua: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1989), 135.

Of course, Yahweh had already chosen Israel. Now, Joshua forced Israel to recognize that they must choose Yahweh.

The Individuality of Worship

In the context of calling the entire nation to the exclusive worship of Yahweh, Joshua made his own vigorous declaration of allegiance to Yahweh. He emphatically declared his allegiance to God.

Joshua's own choice was emphatic: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The English uses a future tense here, but the Hebrew tense has a fuller meaning. It expresses continuous action. It involves the future, but it also can point to the past. Joshua was undoubtedly affirming, "I have chosen, and I will choose."¹⁷

Joshua exemplified the necessity of continuously choosing to worship the LORD. Israel had witnessed Joshua's own sincere devotion to Yahweh over the course of a long career. Nevertheless, Joshua did not rely on his past devotion to the Lord. Rather, he determined to continually worship Yahweh alone.

Interestingly, Joshua made this vigorous declaration when he "was old and well advanced in years" (Josh 23:1). He was around 110 years of age (Josh 24:29). He knew that he was "about to go the way of all the earth" (Josh 24:14). Despite Joshua's age, he felt passionate about his own worship of the Lord. Likely, experience had taught him to be skeptical of Israel's devotion to Yahweh. Yet, for Joshua as an individual, nothing was more important than declaring and living with total devotion to the Lord.

¹⁷Schaeffer, *Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History*, 215-16.

The Family of Worship

Though Joshua was a thoroughly devoted man, his allegiance to Yahweh was not merely personal. Rather, Joshua declared allegiance to Yahweh on behalf of his entire family. He declared, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh 24:15b). Significantly, Joshua used the word “house.” This word “is applied to a household or family.”¹⁸ Joshua spoke as the head of his household. He was personally responsible for leading his family in worship, and he promised that his entire household would worship none but Yahweh.

Joshua understood his devotion to Yahweh in relation to his family. He did not worship entirely alone but in the context of family. Indeed, Joshua’s decision “was not made in isolation, for Joshua leads the way, proclaiming that his family has already chosen Yahweh.”¹⁹ Joshua and his family had chosen Yahweh in the past, and Joshua promised that his family would continue to choose Yahweh. Regardless of the choice of the broader nation, Joshua and his family would worship Yahweh alone.

Joshua not only issued a stirring call for the worship of Yahweh, he served as a model of the same. The worship of Yahweh alone is required even in an extremely polytheistic culture. Exclusive worship, however, must be expressed not only in the life of an individual but in the life of a family. Joshua serves as a tremendous example of faithful worship both as an individual and within his family.

¹⁸Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 1:241.

¹⁹Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 5 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 274.

Psalm 78:1-8

Psalm 78:1-8 is a passage with profound implications for family worship. Written by Asaph, the Psalm itself is a written expression of worship. Asaph was a worshipper of God, and he fervently reminded his own generation of their solemn duty to worship their Redeemer God; “Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth” (Ps 78:1). Not only were they responsible to worship the Lord, but Asaph would remind them that it was their duty as well to teach the coming generations to do the same.

Asaph himself had been a beneficiary of faithful efforts of previous generations. He wrote, “I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us” (Ps 78:2-3). Having benefited so greatly from previous generations, Asaph now called upon his peers to continue the tradition of teaching the coming generations about Yahweh.

Moreover, this passage abounds with implications for the discipline of family worship. A sense of urgency regarding future generations pervades the text. “Now, the prophet teaches us, that it is our bounden duty to use our endeavours that there may be a continual succession of persons to communicate instruction in divine truth.”²⁰ This tradition of discipling generations was a continuation of the plan of God for his people from the very beginning (Deut 6:1-9). While other efforts such as festivals, corporate worship, and personal discipling are essential to fulfill the duty of passing the faith on to

²⁰John Calvin, *Psalms 36-92, Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 230.

the next generation, the discipline of family worship must not be overlooked as an integral means of fulfilling the duty expressed in the passage.

The Leader of Family Worship

Psalm 78 emphasizes the importance of fathers in terms of discipling the next generation. Fathers are called by God to lead their children to worship Him. Asaph wrote, “He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children” (Ps 78:5-6). Asaph likely has in mind the responsibilities of the covenant community as a whole for discipling the coming generations. Yet, within the covenant community, the fathers are singled out for special responsibility in terms of discipling their children. God calls fathers to teach children about Himself.

Often, the roles of the church and the family in terms of discipleship are debated. Who is responsible for the discipleship of children: the church or parents? In fact, one could argue, both are responsible. As one commentator notes, “The psalmist here recognizes the obligation resting on individual parents, but above all on the church as such, to continue the transmission of this knowledge to the latest generations.”²¹ Obviously, this writer emphasizes the role of the church above that of the family, but not before clarifying that parents are obligated to disciple their own children.

Care should be taken to avoid an either/or dichotomy in this debate. Both churches and parents are responsible for the spiritual development of children. The

²¹J. A. Alexander, *The Psalms* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, & Co., 1873), 2:194.

emphasis of this passage, however, is given to parents, especially to fathers. Another commentator writes, “Through Moses he had commanded all Israelites, regardless of tribal descent, to instruct their children at home.”²² A better way to think about this tension might be to suggest that fathers have primary responsibility to disciple their own children, and they should do so within the context of the covenant community. While it would be a grievous error to relinquish responsibility entirely to the church, it would be equally erroneous to remove children from the church and seek to disciple children exclusively at home.

How are fathers to fulfill the duty of leading coming generations to worship Yahweh? Asaph emphasized two means of fulfilling this duty: word and example. First, fathers must give verbal instruction in the worship of Yahweh. Asaph declared, “We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done” (Ps 78:4). In order not to hide the glorious deeds of God from the coming generations, both word and example must be employed by fathers as instructive means.

Instruction by word is stressed by the use of the word translated “tell.”

Significantly,

sapar is used of general mathematical activity In the Piel stem, the iterative concept, ‘recount,’ takes on the added idea of ‘tell,’ ‘declare,’ ‘show forth.’ Fathers are to instruct their children of the need of the primacy of God in the life and of his mighty wonders so that their children may, in turn, transmit this information to their offspring.²³

²²Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, in vol. 5 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 506.

²³Harris, Archer, Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*, 2:1539. Emphasis original.

Fathers have the responsibility of declaring verbally to their children “the primacy of God” in life. Of course, a father’s verbal declaration will occur on many occasions, including serendipitously in daily life. What better way, however, to ensure the fulfillment of this command, than by scheduling regular family worship, whereby a father intentionally seeks to make this glorious declaration to his children?

Fathers must tell their children about the primacy of Yahweh, but they must also model the primacy of Yahweh before their children. Asaph instructed fathers to teach the next generation by modeling when he reminded them “that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God” (Ps 78:8). Fathers are examples to children, whether positive or negative. In this verse, Asaph recalls the dubious history of Israel.

Far too often generations of fathers set for their children examples of unfaithfulness. Faithfully leading family worship is an important element for setting a good example before the next generation. It may be impossible to measure the importance of the spiritual example parents set for children in the home. Charles H. Spurgeon wrote, “The more of parental teaching the better; ministers and Sunday school teachers were never meant to be substitutes for mother’s tears and father’s prayers.”²⁴ While parents set an example for children in a wide variety of ways in all of life, family worship can be a central element in this regard. What value would the consistent practice

²⁴Charles H. Spurgeon, *Psalms 58-110, The Treasury of David*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers), 331.

of family worship on a daily basis be in terms of setting an example before children of the primacy of God in daily life?

The Goal of Family Worship

The goal of family worship can be stated simply. The goal of family worship is to lead children to worship God. Furthermore, the goal is that the worship of Yahweh will continue from generation to generation. God appointed the family in order to teach successive generations about Him, His works, and His laws, so that the worship of Him might never end. Asaph reminded his hearers that God “commanded our fathers to teach their children” (Ps 78:5). New generations will rise up and worship the true God when they have been taught to do so by preceding generations. Specifically, in this text, Asaph instructed fathers to teach their children to know God and to follow Him.

Fathers must teach children to know God. Asaph wrote that the purpose of this generational concern was “that they might know” (Ps 78:6). Throughout the passage parents are charged to ensure that their children know both God’s work and God’s word. The larger concern must be that the children know God. God’s works are designed to reveal God himself to his people. “The history of redemption is revelatory. The Lord’s mighty acts reveal his love, mercy, and patience with his people.”²⁵ Parents can lead children to know God by teaching both his word and his works, especially by describing their own personal experiences with God. Spurgeon believed that “the first lesson for a child should be concerning his mother’s God.”²⁶

²⁵VanGemeren, *Psalms*, 505.

²⁶Spurgeon, *Psalms 58-110*, 331.

Fathers and mothers must teach children to follow God. The parents in the covenant community should teach their children “so that they should set their hope in God and not forget” (Ps 78:7). The idea of children setting “their hope in God” is poetic and inspiring. What does it mean for generations to “set their hope” in God? While it would be impossible to exhaust the topic, at least in part, “hoping in God” means to live a life of faithful worship and obedience to God, believing that He “rewards those who seek him” (Heb 11:6). Hoping in God is another way of stressing the ultimate purpose of man; the holistic worship of God.

There is an emphasis in the passage on children learning, not only to know God’s laws, but to obey them. Asaph would have future generations not to forsake but to “keep his commandments” (Ps 78:7). The desire expressed is for more than temporary obedience to God’s law. Asaph would have future generations to keep God’s law through a lifetime of faithfulness. His desire was “that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God” (Ps 78:8). Parents are called to devote their lives to the end that their own children will live a life of faithful obedience to God. Consistent teaching of the word of God is no small element of this devotion, because the “narratives, commands, and doctrines of the word of God are not worn out; they are calculated to exert an influence as long as our race shall exist.”²⁷

Psalm 78 is full of import for those who would live a life devoted to the primacy of God. Of this passage, John Calvin wrote,

²⁷Ibid., 332.

In short, what he means is, that the sum of heavenly wisdom consists in this, the men, having their hearts fixed on God by a true and unfeigned faith, call upon him, and that, for the purpose of maintaining and cherishing their confidence in him, they exercise themselves in meditating in good earnest upon his benefits; and that they yield to him an unfeigned and devoted obedience.²⁸

This vision of life devoted to the primacy of God is glorious and inspiring. Perhaps even more glorious and inspiring is the idea of passing the same devotion down to successive generations. The godly desire is for children and grandchildren to live a life devoted to the primacy of God. To this great end, family worship can be no small means.

Ephesians 6:4

While the Bible in other places stresses the role of mothers as shapers of their children's spirituality, Ephesians 6:4 stresses the role of fathers as shapers of children's spiritual lives.²⁹ The apostle Paul wrote, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4). As it was in the first century, so it is extremely important today for fathers to understand and to assume their role as primary shapers of their children's spirituality.

A Father's Headship of the Household

Paul deemed it necessary to reinforce the important role of fathers in the rearing of children. One commentator notes, "Paul enjoins parents (lit., "fathers," who in the ancient world wielded authority in the family) to avoid or to stop exasperating their

²⁸Calvin, *Psalm 36-92*, 233.

²⁹For passages related to a mother's role in her children's spiritual lives, see Prov 1:8, 6:20, 15:20, 30:17; Eph 6:1-3; and 2 Tim 1:5.

children.”³⁰ While mothers likewise should not exasperate their children, fathers especially must heed this command. It was necessary to urge fathers to assume a leading role in the rearing of children in the ancient world, and it remains necessary in our present world. One important way fathers can bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord is by consistently leading the practice of family worship. Much more than leading family worship will be required of fathers in order to fulfill this parental duty, such as initiating individual discipleship and ensuring faithful church involvement. Nevertheless, faithfully leading in family worship provides a consistent time of instruction for children, which lies at the heart of Paul’s command to fathers in this helpful verse.

A Father’s Influence upon His Children

Paul teaches that fathers exert a tremendous influence upon the development of a child’s disposition. He warns, “Do not provoke your children to anger” (Eph 6:4). God has given fathers authority over children. Yet, according to this verse, “fathers (or parents) are urged not to assert their authority over children in a manner more calculated to provoke resentment than ready obedience.”³¹ One benefit of regular family worship is the simple act of fathers giving daily attention to children with a special concern for the spiritual welfare of the children. If done in the right spirit, family worship can help fathers to fulfill the admonishment found in this verse.

³⁰William W. Klein, *Ephesians*, in vol. 12 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 157.

³¹F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 398.

It should be noted that, as with all duties, fathers must be careful to lead the family in a gentle and kind spirit. It will not be enough simply to lead the effort. Fathers must lead in such a way as not to anger children in the very act of family worship. John Calvin wrote,

Kind and liberal treatment has rather a tendency to cherish reverence for their parents, and to increase the cheerfulness and activity of their obedience, while a harsh and unkind manner rouses them to obstinacy, and destroys natural affections.³²

Fathers must beware of the danger of “rousing obstinacy” in children during family worship by leading it in a harsh and unkind manner.

A Father’s Nurture of His Children

Rather than provoking children, fathers are to nourish children. Paul commanded fathers to “bring them up” (Eph 6:4). It has been observed that, “Paul used the verb here translated ‘bring up’ . . . in 5:29 of a person’s care for his body; he nourishes or ‘feeds’ it. Parents need to nourish their children.”³³ Spiritual instruction is at the heart of the kind of nourishment this text demands. In order to nourish children, fathers must provide spiritual instruction for them. The biblical practice of family worship specifically involves instructing children from the Bible. Reading and discussing Scripture, along with prayer, are essential elements of biblical family worship.

³²Calvin, *Psalms 36-92*, 328-29.

³³Klein, *Ephesians*, 157.

Family worship provides a simple means by which fathers can nourish their children by giving them biblical instruction.

A Father's Discipline of His Children

The means by which fathers nourish their children is conveyed by the use of two words: “discipline” and “instruct.” The word translated “discipline” literally means “upbringing, training, instruction, [or] discipline.”³⁴ While the word translated “instruct” means “admonition, warning, [or] instruction.”³⁵ In fact, “These two words are close in meaning. It is not the educational method, but the purpose for which it is used, that characterizes Christian upbringing.”³⁶ Christians are to bring up their children “in the Lord.” Thus, the two words “discipline” and “instruction” are very closely related. Taken together, they paint a picture of a father teaching, counseling, correcting, and ordering the lives of his children so that they are nourished by biblical words and wisdom under his headship.

Again, the picture of fatherhood painted in this verse goes far beyond any one act or discipline. Fulfillment of these duties will include leading children together in worship, carefully administering punishment, and regularly talking to children about life and the gospel. The beauty of family worship is that it enables a father to engage in these activities in a positive way on a regular basis. Practiced faithfully, family worship tends

³⁴Verlyn D. Verbrugge, ed., *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 947.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 878.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 878-79.

to order or discipline the life of a family by requiring a regular time of intentional devotion. Moreover, family worship involves a father speaking intimately with his children about the things of God. It provides the perfect opportunity to explain the Scriptures and to counsel children about how to apply Scripture to their own lives.

A Father's Aim for His Children

Above all, fathers are called to bring children up in the discipline and instruction “of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). This text reissues the fundamental call God has always given to his covenant people: that they should make it their aim to lead future generations to worship God in all of life. Fathers are called to devote themselves to this end. Of a father's duty to his children, Calvin admonished, “Let their conduct towards their children be at once mild and considerate, so as to guide them to the fear of the Lord, and correct them also when they go astray.”³⁷ Father's should make every effort, then, to lead family worship faithfully and lovingly. For there can be no greater platform than family worship for fathers to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord.

Hebrews 11

Hebrews 11 highlights the piety of several important biblical characters. It may be important to have a working definition of the word “piety.” Piety may be understood as “reverence, shrinking back in fear, [or] worship.”³⁸ Due to the limitations of the length and scope of this paper, the piety of only four of the people mentioned in

³⁷John Calvin, *Hebrews, Calvin's Commentaries* vol. 22 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 329.

³⁸Verbrugge, *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 1151-52.

Hebrews 11 will be considered. Further, the role of family religion as an essential element of piety will be noted. While many other important qualities in the lives of these saints could be mentioned, the vital role of family religion was a common expression of piety for each of them. The importance of piety within the family is highlighted in the lives of Noah, Abraham, Sarah, and Jacob.

Noah

Noah was a man of tremendous piety. He built the ark “in reverent fear” (Heb 11:6). His life would provide a rich study at many levels (Gen 5-10). His devotion and influence upon his family, however, was clearly an essential expression of his reverence toward God.

While all the church of God was in the ark, the worship was plainly family worship; and after the subsiding of the waters, when ‘Noah builded [sic] an ark unto the Lord,’ it was a family sacrifice which he offered (Gen 8:28).³⁹

If one would follow the example of Noah, family worship would certainly be an essential element of his own piety. Fearing God as Noah did would mean faithfully leading one’s family to worship God as a way of life.

Abraham

Abraham was so devoted to God that he is called “the man of faith” (Gal 3:9). His devotion to God had tremendous implications for his family life. He is said to have been “living in tents with Isaac and Jacob” (Heb 11:9). Abraham’s family, especially his son and grandson, assuredly felt the influence of Abraham’s faith. In fact, leading his

³⁹James W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1998), 3.

family to worship the true God was one of the very reasons God called Abraham out of the idolatry of Ur. “I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice” (Gen 18:19). And how could Abraham have fulfilled this calling apart from some practice of family worship?

Family worship was a primary expression of the faith of Abraham. Donald S. Whitney reasons,

When would he have done this? He did not have others to rely upon. He could not turn for help to the ministries of the local church. The only way Abraham could have commanded his children to keep the way of the Lord was to teach the things of God at home.⁴⁰

Indeed Abraham “built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord” (Gen 12:8). One may safely assume that as Abraham worshipped the Lord at the altar, he did so with his family present. Abraham is an example of expressing faith in God in the context of family relationships and family worship.

Sarah

The Bible affirms men and insists upon the faithful leadership of men in the home. The Bible also affirms women and emphasizes the important role of women in many ways, including family worship. Timothy was influenced from his infancy by both his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois. Through these devoted women, Timothy became “acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for

⁴⁰Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship: In the Bible, in History, & in Your Home* (Shepherdsville, KY: The Center for Biblical Spirituality, 2006), 12-13.

salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). Eunice and Lois highlight the importance of mothers and grandmothers in the spiritual development of children.

Sarah is another example of a pious woman, and she is included in Hebrews 11. Sarah, as well as Abraham, left Ur to follow and to worship the Lord. Perhaps she was present and worshipped alongside Abraham when “he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD” (Gen 12:8). Though Sarah’s character flaws are obvious from the biblical story, it should be remembered that “despite her initial skepticism, Sarah came to share Abraham’s faith.”⁴¹ Inclusion of her name in Hebrews 11 testifies to God’s own estimation of Sarah’s piety.

Sarah, therefore, deserves study as an example of reverence toward God. Described in 1 Peter 3:5 as one who “hoped in God,” Peter calls women to follow her example by saying, “And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening” (1 Pet 3:6). In fact, “Verse 6 becomes even more specific, for now Sarah, the wife of Abraham, is introduced as an example for the women of Peter’s day.”⁴² Sarah is well worth consideration as an example of piety, by both men and women. She expressed her faith in God within the family, which, in her day, would have been the most consistent, and almost the only, sphere in which she could have openly demonstrated her piety toward God. Her devotion to God would have been observable to

⁴¹Leon Morris, *Hebrews*, in vol. 12 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 120.

⁴²Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 156.

both her husband and her children within her home, not least when she joined them to worship God as a family.

Jacob

Abraham's faith and practice of family worship would have had a profound impact upon his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob. Both of these men are mentioned in Hebrews 11 as examples of faith. Jacob expressed his faith in many ways, one of the most important of which was family worship. The author of Hebrews notes that as an old man, "Jacob, when dying, blessed each one of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff" (Heb 11:21). This verse likely refers to "Genesis 47:31 [which] states Jacob worshipped while leaning on his staff and this is prior to the blessing of Joseph's sons, but the entire unit of meaning is viewed together by our author."⁴³ Though this act of worship was a unique occasion in the life of Jacob, it may provide a glimpse into the daily practice of family worship among God's people.

The word translated "worship" in Genesis 47:31 can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The sense in which the word is taken has ramifications for understanding the passage in terms of its relationship to family worship.

The description of Jacob's reaction poses translation problems. The first question is the sense of *hawa*, meaning either "worship" or "bowing" (i.e., resting on, leaning on). The NIV's "worshipped . . ." interprets *hawa* as the technical use of the term, that is, bowing before God. (e.g., 24:26; Deut 17:3)⁴⁴

The fact that the NIV and other translations retain the use of the more technical word

⁴³David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary, vol. 35 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2010), 558-59.

⁴⁴Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 862. Emphasis original.

“worship” alludes to the fact that this episode in the life of Jacob could very well be understood as an act of worship. After discussing burial plans, Jacob, along with his son Joseph, may well have bowed on his bed in worship.

Other episodes from Jacob’s later years prove instructive in terms of family worship. In Genesis 49:1, “Jacob called his sons and said, ‘Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come.’” Jacob gathered his sons around him and blessed each one of them. The blessing of Jacob upon his children extends far beyond a simple time of family devotion, but it certainly includes several important elements of worship. His blessing upon Dan includes a personal address to God: “I wait for your salvation, O Lord” (Gen 49:18). His blessing upon Joseph includes a prayer that the blessings of the father “may . . . be on the head of Joseph” (Gen 49:28). Further, Jacob rooted his blessing upon Joseph in the description of God as “the Mighty One of Jacob,” “the Shepherd,” and “the Stone of Israel” (Gen 49:24). The blessing of his children was an important milestone in Jacob’s life. The blessing was addressed to God, included personal and truthful descriptions of God, and involved direct prayers for his children. These elements are instructive for contemporary believers, not only in terms of special milestone events, but also for the daily worship of God in families.

Though Jacob’s blessings involve much more than merely serving as a model for family worship, contemporary believers would do well to follow his example by including scriptural blessings in family worship. Without violating a particular text, a Christian parent can turn biblical blessings into Scriptural prayers for his or her own children. David Michaels argues that

it is biblically appropriate for spiritual leaders in the home and church to pronounce blessings I will hasten to encourage spiritual leaders in the church, and

especially husbands and fathers, to assume the responsibility and privilege of blessing those they are called to lead.⁴⁵

Every father, like Jacob, is called to lead his family spiritually. Leading in family worship is one important way to provide such leadership. Scriptural blessings can enrich the spiritual leadership a father provides and the worship in which a family engages on a daily basis.

Conclusion

Man was created to worship God. In fact, God ordained humanity to procreate so that the worship of God would fill the earth. Concerning this very point, the prophet Malachi reasoned, “Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth” (Mal 2:15). An essential purpose of the institution of marriage is the bringing forth of children who will worship Yahweh. John Piper explains, “This purpose of marriage is not merely to add more bodies to the planet. The point is to increase the number of followers of Jesus on the planet.”⁴⁶

After the Fall, one of God’s purposes for his covenant people is a return to this very purpose of bringing forth worshippers. God explained the essence of the Exodus to Moses saying, “That you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you

⁴⁵David Michael, *A Father’s Guide to Blessing His Children* (Minneapolis: Bethlehem Baptist Church, 2010), 9.

⁴⁶Piper, *Marriage is meant for making children . . . Disciples of Jesus*, pt. 1.

may know that I am the LORD” (Exod 10:2). One of the primary duties of God’s people is to pass down to their children knowledge of God’s law and God’s redemptive work in the world. The goal of this generational discipleship is that every new generation will know the Lord.

Moreover, the call to fathers and mothers to disciple their children, continues until the very end of the age when Christ will return and recreate the heavens and the earth. In the new creation, all nations will gather to worship the one true God, Yahweh. John, the beloved disciple, saw a vision of worship in the new creation:

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and people and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’ (Rev 7:9-10)

On that day, humanity will be brought back to its original purpose of worshipping the true God. Mankind will gather as one new and perfect family worshipping God together in complete harmony.

Until that happy day, God has ordained the means by which His worship would continue throughout successive generations. Without minimizing the important place that corporate worship has within the purposes of God, it must be understood that family worship also has a crucial role in extending His worship to the ends of the earth. Of God’s law and redemptive works John Calvin wrote,

By this means, all pretence of ignorance is removed; for it was the will of God that these things should be published from age to age without interruption; so that being transmitted from father to child in each family, they might reach ever the last family of man.⁴⁷

⁴⁷Calvin, *Psalms 36-92*, 230.

Until that last family of man is reached, parents, especially fathers, have a solemn obligation to lead their families to worship God.

CHAPTER 3
HISTORICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES
RELATED TO FAMILY WORSHIP

Introduction

This chapter will examine some important historical and practical issues related to the spiritual discipline of family worship. The chapter is divided into four sections: family worship in historic confessions and covenants, the use of catechisms in family worship, the practice of family worship in the lives of important historical figures, and historical and contemporary practices of family worship. The aim of this chapter is to learn about family worship by considering how it has been understood, taught, and practiced in the past, as well as to discover some helpful tools for practicing family worship in the present.

Family worship has long been viewed as an important means of promoting spiritual zeal among God’s people. The Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther, produced his *Small Catechism* in response to his observations of the weakness of the Lutheran churches.¹ He explained that the “deplorable conditions which I recently encountered when I was a visitor constrained me to prepare this brief and simple catechism or

¹Martin Luther, *A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther’s Small Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), 39.

statement of Christian teaching.”² Luther promoted family worship among the German people as one of the surest means of strengthening the Lutheran church. Even today, one of the best ways to address spiritual stagnation in a church or in a denomination is to develop the spiritual discipline of family worship among God’s people.

Family worship has been viewed not only as a means to spiritual revival but as an indicator of the spiritual climate among God’s people. The Puritan pastor, Richard Baxter, observed spiritual apathy among the people upon commencing his ministry in the English city of Kidderminster. Yet, after years of faithful gospel ministry, he could observe the spiritual growth among his people by noticing their regular practice of family worship. In his introduction to a reprint of Baxter’s classic, *The Reformed Pastor*, J. I. Packer notes that Baxter observed,

On the Lord’s days . . . you might hear an hundred families singing psalms and repeating sermons as you passed through the streets . . . when I came thither first there was about one family in a street that worshipped God and called on his name, and when I came away there were some streets where there was not past one family in the side of a street that did not so; and that did not by professing serious godliness, give us hope of their sincerity.³

Baxter’s hope for the souls of his people grew as he overheard their worship of God in their homes. Family worship was an indicator to the Puritan pastor of the spiritual climate among God’s people.

The spiritual discipline of family worship can be viewed as both a means to and a fruit of spiritual revival among God’s people. Examining how Christians have

²Mark A. Noll, *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 61.

³Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle: PA, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1999), 12.

implemented family worship historically has tremendous potential for promoting and evidencing revival in our own day. By God’s grace, promoting family worship will serve to strengthen the local church, and the spiritual renewal among God’s people will be readily evidenced by the joyful practice of family worship in a new generation.

Examination of the Instruction on Family Worship in Historic Confessions of Faith and Church Covenants

The practice of family worship among Christians historically can be instructive. Observing what Christians wrote about family worship in important confessions and covenants can help one to understand the discipline for believers of another denomination or of another age. This paper will consider the role of family worship during the Reformation, among the Puritans, and among Evangelicals in the present day.

The Reformation Era

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the Reformation Era concerning the practice of family worship. The shift from Rome involved not only important doctrines like justification by faith alone, but also important practices like marriage and family. Indeed,

The Reformers looked at Scripture and insisted that marriage is ordained by God and that the family, far from being something less spiritual than the life of a hermit . . . is the arena for some of the most important spiritual work. A father and a mother are “priests” to their children, not only taking care of their physical needs, but nourishing them in the faith.⁴

⁴Gene Edward Veith, *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 19.

A reformed emphasis on marriage and family redirected the underlying ideal of spirituality from the monastery to the home.

An elevation of the spirituality of domestic life had many ramifications not least of which was the importance of discipling children. Roland Bainton, acclaimed biographer of Luther, states, “One can without exaggeration ascribe to the Reformation the creation of the first body of religious literature for the young.”⁵ Reformation literature for children consisted primarily of catechisms. The Reformation produced a volume of catechisms intended to be used in homes for the spiritual instruction of children. Tom Nettles writes, “The Golden Age of catechisms emerged in the Reformation.”⁶

The *Book of Concord* is a compilation of important Lutheran confessions of faith.⁷ Among the important articles found in the *Book of Concord* are Martin Luther’s *Small and Large Catechism*. The very inclusion of these catechisms among the most important of Lutheran documents speaks to the importance of the discipleship of children and the practice of family worship during the Reformation.

The *Small Catechism* was produced in 1529. Luther intended it to be an aid to family worship. Mark A. Noll explains Luther’s view both of the importance of Christian discipleship in the home and the manner in which his catechism should be used. Noll notes that in the preface to his *Small Catechism*:

⁵Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 263.

⁶Tom J. Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press Publishing, 1998), 17.

⁷*Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church* [on-line]; accessed 18 July 2011; available from <http://old.bookofconcord.org/pdf/TrigBOC.pdf>; Internet.

[Luther] condemns parents who, by neglecting the Christian education of their children, have become the “worst enemies of God and man.” Almost all of the catechism’s sections begin with remarks directed at the head of the house (e.g. “The Ten Commandments in the plain form in which the head of the family shall teach it to his household”).⁸

The use of a catechism in such a way may well be understood as an element of family worship. According to Luther, the responsibility for leading a family to worship God belonged to the head of the household. He designed the catechism in order to assist the head of the household in the performance of this duty.

Luther’s view of this kind of intentional catechetical discipleship in family worship is instructive for all believers. In the preface to his *Large Catechism* he suggests that “it is the duty of every father of a family to question and examine his children and servants at least once a week and to ascertain what they know of it, or are learning, and, if they do not know it, to keep them faithfully at it.”⁹ Luther envisioned a father using the catechism once a week to examine the members of his household closely concerning their comprehension of a broad scope of biblical knowledge. In any household, the faithful practice of family worship will most certainly involve much more than catechetical instruction. Above all, families will read the Bible, pray daily, and sing biblical hymns and songs. Following the Reformation pattern, however, a family may be wise to add to these formative practices a weekly spiritual inventory assisted by biblical catechisms.

⁸Noll, *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation*, 59-60.

⁹Martin Luther, *Large Catechism* [on-line]; accessed 20 May 2011; available from <http://old.bookofconcord.org/largecatechism/2>; Internet.

The Puritan Era

In many respects what the Reformers began in the sixteenth century, the Puritans furthered in the seventeenth century. The Puritans worked to establish important doctrines like justification by faith alone, as well as important practices like the purity of the church. Similarly, the Puritans strengthened the practice of family worship as a spiritual discipline among the people of God.

While the Puritans rightly stressed the priority of the public worship of God in the church, they also valued the worship of God within the home. J. I. Packer notes, “There are, said the Puritans, three spheres of Christian worship: public, in the local church; domestic, in the family circle; private, in the closet.”¹⁰ Packer, recognizing the importance of family worship among the Puritans, reiterates that

family worship was also, to the Puritans, vitally important. Every home should be a church, with the head of the house as its minister. Daily, and indeed twice daily, the Puritans recommended the family as a family should hear the word read, and pray to God.¹¹

The influence of Reformation thinking is very evident in this view of family worship.

The Puritans emphasized that family worship be consistently practiced in the homes of believers.

Family worship was so important to the Puritans that instructions regarding the practice found a prominent place among their most important documents. The Presbyterian-dominated Westminster Assembly produced several important articles of faith collectively known as the *Westminster Standards*. The *Standards* include a wide

¹⁰J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 255.

¹¹*Ibid.*

range of articles including a monumental statement of faith, catechisms, and a directory for public worship. Also, included among “the *Westminster Standards* [is] a *Directory for Family-Worship*.”¹² Family worship was so highly esteemed by the Puritans as to merit a specific document addressing the matter among the most important articles of faith.

The *Directory for Family-Worship* provides instructions on the importance and practice of family worship. The statement opens,

Besides the publick worship in congregations, mercifully established in this land in great purity, it is expedient and necessary that secret worship of each person alone, and private worship of families, be pressed and set up; that, with national reformation, the profession and power of godliness, both personal and domestick, be advanced.¹³

Their understanding of the relationship between the church and state aside, the Puritans placed tremendous value on the practice of family worship and rightly understood the formative nature of the practice and its implications for the church and society.

Presbyterian Puritans valued family worship so highly that they charged local church pastors to examine church members regarding the practice. The introduction to *The Directory for Family-Worship* charges elders to

make diligent search and enquiry, in the congregations committed to their charge respectively, whether there be among them any family or families which use to neglect this necessary duty; and if any such family be found, the head of the family is to be first admonished privately to amend his fault; and, in case of his continuing therein, he is to be gravely and sadly reproofed by the session; after which reproof, if he be found still to neglect Family-Worship, let him be, for his obstinacy in such an offence, suspended and debarred from the Lord’s supper, as being justly esteemed unworthy to communicate therein, till he amend.¹⁴

¹²Terry L. Johnson, *The Family Worship Book* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2009), 9.

¹³*The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Productions, 1997), 419.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 418.

Thus, the Puritans considered family worship to be so essential to the faith that a failure to adopt the practice in a particular home rendered one susceptible to formal church discipline. Even those today who might recoil at the thought of debarring a church member for neglecting this discipline still can find much in the teaching and practice of family worship by the Puritans helpful.

In this regard, the Puritans can instruct and encourage contemporary Christians on both the value and the practice of family worship. Puritan pastor Richard Baxter, admonished his own people to make their children's spiritual lives a priority. He admonished,

Let spiritual love to your family be predominant, and let your care be greatest for the saving of their souls, and your compassion greatest in their spiritual miseries. Be first careful to provide them a portion in heaven, and to save them from whatsoever would deprive them of it; and never prefer the transitory pelf [wealth] of earth, before their everlasting riches.¹⁵

Without elevating family worship above congregational worship, the Puritans rightly understood that family worship is an essential way in which parents express spiritual care for their children. The ministry of pastors and the church body should encourage families to worship God at home. It is a means by which parents prayerfully and consistently provide children with the richest of all treasures; the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Contemporary Evangelicalism

Following the Reformation and Puritan Eras, family worship remained a spiritual priority into the 1800s, among western Protestants. For example, an emphasis on family worship remained in many church covenants. This reality is certainly true of

¹⁵Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory* (Grand Rapids: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2008), 424.

the church covenant found in J. Newton Brown's *The Baptist Church Manual* produced in 1853. Brown's covenant has been described as "the most widely used covenant among Baptists both in America and in some other countries."¹⁶ In this influential document, church members promise "to maintain family and secret devotion; to religiously educate our children."¹⁷ So for churches who adopted this covenant, family worship would be one of every member's solemnly sworn duties.

Family worship, then, has been understood by Christians from various eras as an important spiritual discipline. Sadly, the practice appears to have waned. Though family worship certainly remained a priority for some, the practice lost its footing among Evangelicals broadly. A recently adopted resolution on the issue of family worship by the Southern Baptist Convention begins with the acknowledgment that "in recent generations, the act of family worship has been neglected, evidenced by the breakdown of the family in our time."¹⁸ In the early twenty-first century, Southern Baptists recognized a neglect of this important discipline, along with resultant harmful consequences. Southern Baptists rightly lamented the diminishment of family worship.

Southern Baptists did more than lament the situation in the summer of 2010. In its annual session, the Convention adopted a resolution urging Southern Baptists to recover the practice of family worship. In what may be hoped to be a reflection of broader sentiment within Evangelicalism, the resolution affirms the importance of family

¹⁶Charles W. Deweese, *Baptist Church Covenants* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 60-61.

¹⁷Timothy George and Denise George, *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 224.

¹⁸*SBC Resolution: On Family Worship* [on-line]; accessed 12 April 2011; available from <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution>; Internet.

worship both biblically and historically and calls upon the messengers to the Convention to “encourage churches and families to rekindle the spiritual discipline of family worship.”¹⁹ The resolution calls “fathers particularly to fulfill their divinely mandated responsibility to lead their families toward spiritual maturity.”²⁰ Finally, the resolution concludes by urging that

the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention and their pastors to promote family worship and encourage the families of their congregations to place the highest priority on embracing this foundational spiritual discipline for the well-being of families, the spread of the gospel, the making of disciples, and the glory of God.²¹

The messengers gathered at the 2010 Southern Baptist Convention could have done more to promote the actual practice of family worship within their denomination. For instance, they could have requested LifeWay Christian Resources, their publishing arm, to produce materials for family worship. Nevertheless, the resolution was at least an attempt to bring attention to this extremely important issue.

The question remains as to how well the resolution was received by Southern Baptists. The same could be said for contemporary Evangelicalism at large. Currently, much is being written about family worship. Books, practical resources, and other materials are readily available to assist families in the practice of family worship. It may well be that a renewal of commitment to family worship is underway. Evangelicals, like

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

the Puritans and Reformers before them, may once again highly esteem family worship and strive to see it practiced in every Christian home.

Examination of the Use of Catechisms in Relation to Family Worship

An important element of family worship in the history of the church has been that of catechetical instruction. Though historically important, many contemporary believers may not know what a catechism is. Martin Luther included a definition of catechism in the second question of his *Small Catechism*. The question is asked and the answer is given, “What is a catechism? A catechism is a book of instruction in the form of questions and answers.”²² Very simply, a catechism is a series of questions and answers about the Bible, quite often accompanied by a list of pertinent Scriptures.

It should be noted that catechisms should be considered supplementary materials for family worship. The resolution made by messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2010 helpfully defines

family worship as the regular meeting together of a family for a time of prayer and Bible reading, which may include other activities such as scripture memorization, singing spiritual songs and hymns, and discussing biblical truth and Christian mission.²³

Since catechetical instruction has been used to aid scripture memorization and to promote biblical discussion, the use of catechisms may be inferred in this statement. Regardless, catechisms should be understood as aids to family worship rather than necessary elements thereof.

²²Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism*, 39.

²³*SBC Resolution: On Family Worship*.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that catechisms have proven to be immensely helpful throughout the history of the church. In the early church, catechisms were used as teaching guides for new believers seeking entrance into the church.

Catechizing served two purposes: it allowed the candidate (catechuminate) to decide if he still wanted to submit to Christian baptism and gave the church opportunity to discern (as far as human observation can do this) the genuineness of his, or her, conversion. Then, after engaging in a period of fasting and prayer with the church, the candidates were baptized. This use of catechisms served as a safeguard for the purity of the church.²⁴

Though this use of catechisms centers on the church rather than the family, it demonstrates the value of catechisms from the earliest days of the Christian church.

The value of Martin Luther's catechisms, clearly aimed at promoting and assisting family worship, has been noted. Luther himself believed his catechism to be among the most important of his works. He said that he would be "glad to have all his works perish except the reply to Erasmus and the catechism."²⁵ Thus, the Reformer placed tremendous value on catechisms as helps for family worship, an estimation with which many others would agree.

Southern Baptists have a rich history of catechetical instruction. Some of the most influential leaders among them produced and employed catechisms. In the introduction to his *Truth and Grace*, series Tom Ascol notes,

Southern Baptists of an earlier day freely employed catechisms. One of the first publications which the Sunday School Board produced was a catechism by James Boyce, founder and first President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. John Broadus also wrote a catechism which was published by the board in the 19th century. Lottie Moon used a catechism in her missionary work in China.

²⁴Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts*, 16.

²⁵Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 263.

It is only in recent generations that Southern Baptists have moved away from catechetical instruction as an important tool in teaching God's word.²⁶

Lottie Moon's use of catechisms beyond the home and into the mission field is another indicator of the multiplicity of uses Christians have found for catechisms. One of the best uses of a catechism, however, is in the home as an aid to family worship.

Younger Children

One helpful quality of catechisms is that they can be used for instructing people of all ages and of all developmental levels. In fact, catechisms have been intentionally shaped to accommodate various stages of development. Historian Thomas J. Nettles notes, "Many catechists believed that catechisms of different levels should be produced This graduated difficulty in catechism rests on the theory that the earlier the tamping on the mind, the more indelible the result."²⁷ From this we learn that family worship generally and the use of catechisms particularly should begin at the earliest possible age and should continue and be appropriately modified throughout all stages of a child's development.

The principle of establishing Scriptural instruction at the earliest possible age fits well with the biblical pattern. The life of Timothy is an example of this principle.

The Apostle Paul wrote to admonish Timothy,

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim 3:14-15)

²⁶Thomas K. Ascol, *Truth and Grace Memory Book* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2005), v.

²⁷Nettles, *Teaching Mind, Training Hearts*, 19.

Paul reminded his disciple that he had learned Scripture “from childhood.” The Greek word *brepheos* is more accurately translated “from infancy” in The New International Version. The word “denotes an unborn or newborn child, infant.”²⁸ Here is a clear indication that Timothy was acquainted with Scripture from his infancy.

The question then becomes, “How did Timothy become acquainted with Scripture from his infancy?” Paul’s earlier words to Timothy must not be overlooked, “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well” (2 Tim 1:5). Scholar William Mounce reasons

that Paul has already made reference to Timothy’s spiritual heritage that includes his mother and grandmother (1:5), and . . . Paul will next refer to Timothy’s childhood (3:15), it may be assumed that among those teachers are his mother Eunice, and grandmother, Lois.²⁹

Beyond question, Timothy grew in his knowledge of the Scriptures through his apprenticeship with the Apostle Paul. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that he initially learned about the Scriptures at the knee of his mother and grandmother.

Here is a pattern than any believing family would do well to follow. Many catechisms exist explicitly for the very purpose of assisting families to implant Scripture into the hearts of their children from the earliest days of infancy. Timothy George notes that a Baptist catechism produced by H. Jessey in 1652 is entitled *A Catechism for Babes, or, Little Ones: Suitable to their capacity more than others have been formerly*.³⁰ The

²⁸Verlyn D. Verbrugge, ed., *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 951.

²⁹William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 563.

³⁰George, *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms*, 227.

very title reflects a concern for providing materials appropriate for the very young. Jesse speaks of his motivations for the catechism in the preface:

I much desired to see one so plain and easy in the expressions, as that the very babes that can speak but stammeringly, and are of weak capacities, might understand what they say: and might have some help in prayer and thanksgiving to be with their understandings; and not as in a strange tongue.³¹

Catechisms can assist parents to communicate biblical truth in developmentally appropriate ways to the youngest of children.

A contemporary catechism that many have found helpful for the smallest of children is entitled *A Catechism for Boys and Girls*. This catechism is one of the simplest and easiest to use for young children. Jared Kennedy has helpfully revised this catechism providing headings for groups of questions, such as “The Ten Commandments” or “Prayer.” The revision also includes headings for suggested ages for groups of questions, beginning at 2-3 years old and extending to the fifth grade.³² *A Catechism for Boys and Girls* is an extremely helpful tool to incorporate into family worship practices for the youngest of children.

Older Children

As children grow, so should the approach parents use to lead them to worship God. Whereas the most simple of catechisms should be used for the very young, more advanced catechisms should be employed for older children. The *Westminster*

³¹Ibid., 228.

³²*A Catechism for Boys and Girls* [on-line]; accessed 25 May 2011; available from <http://sojournkids.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/a-catechism-for-boys-and-girls.pdf>; Internet.

Standards include both a *Larger* and a *Shorter Catechism*. The shorter is written “for catechizing such as are of a weaker capacity.”³³ Neither as complex as *The Larger Catechism* nor as simple as *A Catechism for Boys and Girls*, it suffices as a suitable bridge for older children.

An example of the kind of developmental awareness catechisms allow are the *Truth and Grace Memory Books*, compiled by Tom Ascol. These books, which include various catechisms, are arranged around three different age groupings. Book 1, for younger children, utilizes *A Catechism for Boys and Girls*. Book 2, for children grades 5-8, utilizes a variation of *The Shorter Catechism*. Ascol notes this catechism’s historical development:

Keach’s Catechism (whose author, Benjamin Keach – a 17th-Century English Baptist – modeled it after *The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly*) was widely used among Baptists in both England and America. Charles Spurgeon (19th-Century English Baptist leader) revised it slightly and reissued it for use in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. A modern version of this same catechism (*The Shorter Catechism: A Baptist Version*) is introduced in Book 2.³⁴

Here is a catechetical model, revised appropriately for denominational doctrinal nuances, arranged precisely for age appropriate developmental differences. It is essential to begin spiritual instruction of children at the earliest possible age, but beginning early will not be enough. Parents must continue to disciple children as they grow. So long as a child

³³*The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 286.

³⁴Ascol, *Truth and Grace*, iv.

remains under the roof of the parent, he or she should be led to worship God and taught the things of God. A wide variety of catechisms across every developmental stage exist to assist parents in this solemn and demanding duty.

Adults

Catechisms, especially when used as aids to worship in the home, are immensely helpful for the spiritual development of adults as well as children. Christian discipleship does not end upon entrance into adulthood and neither should catechetical instruction in family worship. In the history of the church, “Catechetical instruction was regarded as a valuable method of teaching both children and adults.”³⁵ The family that prioritizes worship and catechetical instruction, therefore, will be continually instructing both children and adults throughout life. As fathers teach various catechisms to their children, they themselves will be worshipping God and growing in the knowledge of Him.

A catechism that has proven most helpful for adults is *The Heidelberg Catechism*. Though this catechism does not affirm certain Baptist distinctives like believer’s baptism, it is orthodox and highly-regarded. Produced in 1563, it endures as an important and influential catechism. In the opinion of one advocate, the *Heidelberg Catechism* is

probably the most famous catechism of the sixteenth century Within a few months of its appearance, Heinrich Bullinger, leader of the Reformed church in Zurich, was hailing it as “the best catechism ever published.” It was soon translated from German into Latin, Dutch, English, French, Greek, and Hungarian, and today it can be found in every European language and dozens of African and Asian languages as well. Many scholars regard it as the most irenic . . . expression of the

³⁵Ibid.

Christian faith to come out of the Protestant Reformation. It is certainly among the most beloved.³⁶

A catechism so beloved and widely used has already proven its worth for God's people. The wise will give it due consideration as an aid for the family worship and Christian discipleship.

The Heidelberg Catechism was born out of the tensions between Lutheran and Reformed Christians of the early Reformation Era. Its writers were commissioned "to draw up a statement of belief that could combine the best of Lutheran and Reformed wisdom and that could instruct ordinary people in the fundamentals of the Christian faith."³⁷ The goal of the catechism, then, was likely the instruction of adults who were not privy to the pursuit of advanced education, from a broad Protestant perspective.

The catechism was designed for a wide variety of uses. Originally, the aim of "the catechism was to provide instruction in both the 'churches and schools' of the territory."³⁸ While use in schools indicates benefit for the young, use in the churches eludes to helpfulness for adults. The catechism was used in the churches for the benefit of adults. In fact, the "finished product had Scripture references under each question and answer and was divided into 52 sections, or Lord's Days, so that a minister could cover the entire catechism once a year in doctrinal sermons at the afternoon service."³⁹

³⁶Lyle Bierma, *The Heidelberg Catechism* [on-line]; accessed 11 April 2011; available from <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/heidelberg-catechism>; Internet.

³⁷Noll, *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation*, 134.

³⁸Bierma, *Heidelberg*, 3.

³⁹*Ibid.*

Systematic exposition of the catechism with Scripture texts highlights the usefulness of the catechism for adults. Use of the catechism in the church does not preclude its use in the home. Parents may incorporate *The Heidelberg Catechism* in the home for the benefit of their own souls and that of those children who are preparing to leave the home for college or career.

The Heidelberg Catechism is a treasure capable of enriching the life of any Christian of whatever age, including senior citizens. The catechism begins by asking, “What is your only comfort in life and in death?” and answering, “That I am not my own but belong – body and soul, in life and death – to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.”⁴⁰ This first question indicates the depth and warmth of the whole. Even persecuted Christians, or those whose life circumstances cause them to think of their own mortality, will find sweet comfort through this catechism. The aging will invariably find the *Heidelberg Catechism* helpful. Encouraging its use for adults will comfort God’s people and will promote the practice of family worship as a discipline throughout life.

Presentation of the Practice of Family Worship in the Lives of Important Historical Figures

Family worship has been an important practice for many well known Christians. The practice of family worship in the lives of three historical figures, however, is particularly instructive. This paper will note family worship as practiced by Martin Luther, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles H. Spurgeon.

⁴⁰*The Heidelberg Catechism with Scripture Texts* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1989), 9.

Martin Luther

One of the most important figures of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, highly esteemed family worship. Luther's devotion to family worship is demonstrated by his *Small Catechism*, the influence of which is well noted. "Many other catechisms would be written by Lutheran pastors and theologians in the sixteenth century, but this one remained the norm."⁴¹ Luther clearly believed that the young Lutheran churches should establish family worship as an essential discipline. Family worship, aided by his *Small Catechism*, was central to his efforts to strengthen and to establish the Lutheran churches. Yet, it should be noted that Luther's interest in family worship was not merely ecclesiological.

Martin Luther's love for his family motivated his spiritual leadership in his home. The death of a daughter, Magdalena, provides a glimpse of Luther's humanity and affection for his children.

When Magdalena was fourteen years old, she lay upon her deathbed. Luther prayed, "O God, I love her so, but thy will be done." And turning to her, "*Magdalenchen*, my little girl, you would like to stay with your father here and you would be glad to go to your Father in heaven?" And she said, "Yes, dear father, as God wills." And Luther reproached himself because God had blessed him as no bishop had been blessed in a thousand years, and yet he could not find it in his heart to give God thanks. Katie stood far off, overcome by grief; and Luther held the child in his arms as she passed on. When she was laid away, he said, "*Du liebes Lenchen*, you will rise and shine like the stars and the sun. How strange it is to know that she is at peace and all is well, and yet to be so sorrowful!"⁴²

Luther's example of family piety, though certainly theologically and ecclesiological grounded, cannot be separated from genuine love for his children. Family worship is not

⁴¹Noll, *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation*, 59.

⁴²Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 237. Emphasis original.

a stale spiritual duty divorced from authentic affection. Martin Luther felt tenderly toward his children and made every effort possible to cultivate their young souls and to prepare them to meet their God.

Luther's actual practice of family worship, though certainly unorthodox, is quite instructive. The Luther household was most unquestionably a full one. The "Luthers brought up four orphaned children from among relatives, in addition to their own six."⁴³ Several servants were employed by the Luthers adding to the number in the household. Further, the Luther's made a regular practice of opening their home to guests and visitors. In addition to these, theological students often boarded with the Luthers while studying under Martin's tutelage.

Life in the Luther household revolved around regular evening meals to which every person in the household was invited. The evening mealtime became an act that could well be considered family worship often evolving into an extended theological discussion. Provoked by his students Luther would elaborate on a wide range of topics. In fact, "student boarders regarded mealtime as an opportunity to continue their education, and sat at table with notebooks to scribble down every nugget and every clod from his voluble mouth."⁴⁴

These mealtime conversations would become an important part of Martin Luther's legacy. His *Table Talk* would become one of his more popular written works. In fact,

⁴³Ibid., 229.

⁴⁴Ibid.

Luther's *Table Talk* would deserve a notice if for no other reason than its sheer volume. There are 6,596 entries, and it is among the better known of his works because his students after his death culled, classified, and produced a handy volume adorned with a woodcut of Luther at the table with his family.⁴⁵

While Luther's practice goes far beyond what most families could be expected to do in terms of family worship, the picture that emerges of the Luther home is certainly instructive, warm, and worthy of consideration. It would be impossible to imagine such a mealtime absent prayer and, given Luther's love for song, it would be similarly difficult to imagine that this table talk time never included some very hearty singing. Thus, Luther likely led his household in a time of worship that included and extended well beyond the basic elements of Scripture, prayer, and song.

Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards, along with George Whitefield, was one of the most important preachers during the Great Awakening, the influence of which upon early American history is impossible to calculate. But Edwards' brilliance extends far beyond his pastoral role. Biographer George M. Marsden claims, "By many estimates, he was the most acute early American philosopher and the most brilliant of all American theologians."⁴⁶ Jonathan Edwards was not only brilliant, he was also busy. He was widely known for spending hours upon hours in his study. Through his preaching and writing ministry, he was continuously employed as one of the most devoted servants the church has ever known.

⁴⁵Ibid., 230.

⁴⁶George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 1.

Despite Edwards' busy life, he did not fail to devote himself to his family and to the discipline of family worship. His busy days began early, and one of the first duties to which he gave himself was that of leading his family in worship. Biographer Iain H. Murray, records the observation of Samuel Hopkins, who as a ministerial student studying and living with Edwards, described his mentor's early morning routine.

He used himself to rise by four or between four and five in the morning . . . he was wont to have his family up in season in the morning; after which, before the family entered on the business of the day, he attended family prayers, when a chapter in the Bible was read, commonly by candle-light in the winter, upon which he asked his children questions according to their age and capacity.⁴⁷

Edwards included Bible reading, along with age-appropriate questions, and prayer in his practice of family worship. The model of family worship Edwards presents is warm, consistent, and simple. Perhaps family worship contributed to the conclusion of Joseph Emerson, who said the Edwards were the "most agreeable family I was ever acquainted with. Much of the presence of God here."⁴⁸

Samuel Hopkins adds to his description of daily family worship a particular portrait of how Jonathan Edwards led his family to worship on Saturday evenings:

As he believed that the Sabbath or holy time began at sunset the evening before the Day, he ordered his family to finish all their secular business by that time or before, when they were all called together, and a psalm was sung and prayer attended, as an introduction to the sanctifying of the Sabbath.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2003), 182-83.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 185.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 186-87.

Edwards set aside time on Saturday evening for family worship in order to prepare his family for the Lord's Day. In this description, we find Edwards practice of singing Psalms in family worship. These descriptions taken together, find Edwards utilizing Bible reading, prayer, singing, and questions to lead his family to worship the God about whom he would preach and write so brilliantly.

Charles Spurgeon

Charles Haddon Spurgeon is a giant figure in church history. Known as the "Prince of Preachers," he preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London during the mid to late 1800s. He is widely considered the most influential preacher of the nineteenth century and one the greatest preachers who ever lived. The Metropolitan Tabernacle was likely the largest evangelical church in the world during Spurgeon's ministry. In fact, "When a general census of church attendance was taken on an ordinary Sunday in London in 1886 the total congregations at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, morning and evening, exceeded 10,000 people."⁵⁰ Spurgeon's ministry extended well beyond London through his books and published sermons. "By 1899 over a hundred millions [sic] of his sermons had been issued in twenty-three languages."⁵¹ Immensely popular in his own day, Charles Spurgeon remains influential today through his books and sermons.

Though Spurgeon is known for his indefatigable work ethic, his various activities could not keep him from his devoted practice of family worship. Spurgeon possessed an extraordinary ability to work in pastoral ministry, writing, leading a pastor's

⁵⁰Iain H. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002). 15.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

college, supporting various social ministries, aggressive denominational work, and much more. The remarkable life of Spurgeon frankly defies the imagination. And yet, he was “a man who loved his home and was happy in it.”⁵² It was here, in his home, that despite his many activities, Spurgeon faithfully led his own family in worship, usually at six o’clock each evening.

Charles Spurgeon communicated the importance of family worship by, even in the midst of one of the most blessed and active ministries the world has ever witnessed, establishing it as a regular practice in his home. A guest in Spurgeon’s home described the experience of participating in family worship.

One of the most helpful hours of my visits to Westwood was the hour of family prayer. At six o’clock all the household gathered in the study for worship. Usually Mr. Spurgeon would himself lead the devotions. The portion read was invariably accompanied with exposition. How amazingly helpful those homely and gracious comments were.⁵³

The pattern of family worship set forth by Spurgeon in this description is instructive. A definite time for family worship was established. A specific place was determined. The father usually led the time of worship. A portion of Scripture was read, along with a few comments from the Prince of Preachers.

Family worship in the Spurgeon household continued with prayer. Again, his guest wrote,

Then, how full of tender pleading, of serene confidence in God, of world-embracing sympathy were his prayers! With what gracious familiarity he could talk with his Divine Master! Yet what reverence ever marked his address to his Lord. His public

⁵²G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), 2:375.

⁵³William Williams, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Personal Reminiscences* (London: The Religious Tract Society), 36.

prayers were an inspiration and a benediction, but his prayers with the family were to me more wonderful still.⁵⁴

Here is the great preacher humbly praying with and for his own family. Bowing his head, Spurgeon brought the souls of his children to the throne of God. With simplicity and consistency, the great preacher led his own family to worship God in his home. Charles Spurgeon, then, is an outstanding example of family piety for all to follow.

Spurgeon's estimation of family worship can also be seen in his sermons. In a sermon entitled "The Joy of Holy Households," which is an exposition of Psalm 118:15-16, Spurgeon says, "The families of believers are happy, and they should take pains to give their happiness a voice by their family devotions."⁵⁵ For Spurgeon, family worship was, above all, an expression of joy. He concluded,

We should put a tongue in our joys, and let them speak. The voice should be heard daily, from morn until eve, and until the silence of sleep steals over all: but it should never fail to sound forth in the daily gatherings for family prayer. It should be a happy occasion when we meet to read the Word of God, and to pray together. It is well if we can also sing at such times.⁵⁶

For Spurgeon, family worship consisted primarily of Bible reading, prayer, and singing. It was an expression of the joy of a Christian. By his practice and his teaching, Charles Spurgeon was a model of family worship in his own day and in ours.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Charles H. Spurgeon, *Psalms 111-150, The Treasury of David*, vol. 3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers), 107.

⁵⁶Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Sermons on Family and Home* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1995) 15.

Comparison of Historical and Contemporary Practices of Family Worship

Family worship is a spiritual discipline that the Bible teaches and faithful Christians across the centuries have enjoyed. The discipline should be one that is happily performed with a great deal of freedom and variety. Amid the potential variety, three elements emerge as most fundamental and necessary for family worship: reading the Bible, praying, and singing songs of the faith. As Donald S. Whitney instructs, “Basically there are three elements to family worship: read the Bible, pray, and sing. Only three syllables to remember – read, pray, sing.”⁵⁷

Another contemporary voice affirms these elements by stating, “Family worship includes three basic elements and allows room for variety. Read – Pray – Sing is a simple format that will help get you started.”⁵⁸ While these basic elements may profitably be expanded upon, each of them will remain at the heart of all true worship, including family worship. The use of catechisms, for example, has reemerged among current leaders as a popular practice. Catechizing is best understood to be an important aid to family worship rather than an essential element thereof. One author suggests, “At a minimum these three are most essential and should always be included: song, Scripture, and supplication.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship: In the Bible, in History, & in Your Home* (Shepherdsville, KY: The Center for Biblical Spirituality, 2006), 37.

⁵⁸Tony Kummer, *The Beginner’s Family Worship Handbook* [on-line]; accessed 3 June 2011; available from <http://ministry-to-children.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/family-worship-guidebook.pdf> ; 3.

⁵⁹Jerry Marcellino, *Rediscovering the Lost Treasure of Family Worship* (Laurel, MS: Audubon Press, 2002), 15).

Bible Reading

The Scriptures teach that the Bible should be the chief element of all worship. If “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4), then surely the Scriptures must be prominent in worship. The Puritans believed that “parents must teach their children the Scriptures.”⁶⁰ Puritan influence in this matter continues to the present day. In a similar vein, Joel Beeke suggests that parents should “have a plan that covers all ages. Read a few minutes from a Bible story book for the little ones, apply a proverb for the older ones, and read a page or two from a book for teens. A wise plan can overcome any diversity of age.”⁶¹ There is much wisdom in these words. Caring parents will tailor Bible reading for their children according to their capacities, but they will always insist that the Bible holds a primary place in their practice of family worship.

Following Bible reading, parents will be wise to engage their children in spiritual discussion based on the passage read. Two helpful questions have been suggested to promote instructive discussion.

After reading the Bible passage, ask the one big question, “What does this say about God?” This simple approach will turn any scripture reading into a learning discussion. After you have determined what the scripture reading says about God, you can move to the second big question, “How does God want me to respond?” This moves from knowledge about God to obedience to God’s Word.⁶²

⁶⁰Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 256.

⁶¹Joel R. Beeke, *Family Worship* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009), 36.

⁶²Kummer, *The Beginners Family Worship Handbook*, 7.

These questions may prove very helpful for parents. Parents may choose to use them regularly or occasionally to enliven Bible reading and to help children to embrace the Word of God deeply.

Closely related to Bible reading, Scripture memory is an important practice for all believers, especially children. The Psalmist said, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Ps 119:11). As parents read Bible stories and discuss important passages, key verses or passages may be selected for memorization. Catechisms often include lists of texts that can serve as guides for selecting passages for memorization. Some resources books, such as the *Truth and Grace* series, have suggested memorization plans for children of all ages. Whatever resources parents choose to use, Scripture memory is extremely important for children and family worship presents a regular opportunity to encourage this discipline.

Prayer

Alongside Bible reading, prayer remains an essential element of family worship. As in personal or public worship, families must “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17). Richard Baxter argued for this when he wrote,

If we must continue instant in prayer and supplication . . . then doubtless in family prayer, in our families, unless that be no place and no prayer . . . we have more fit opportunities in our own families than in other men’s, or than in occasional meetings, or than in any ordinary societies, except the church.⁶³

Family prayer can be one the richest experiences of prayer, because of the opportunities and intimacy of family life. Family worship will not be complete apart from family

⁶³Baxter, *Christian Directory*, 415.

prayer. As James Alexander helpfully said, “Better a roofless house than a prayerless one.”⁶⁴

Family prayer should be approached with liberty and variety. A contemporary perspective suggests three approaches to prayer as families begin to establish the discipline of family worship.

[First], father takes requests from the children and then prays for them by name. [Second], children pray in turn asking God to help them obey. Parents then thank God for the children. [Third], everyone prays for one another silently for 60 seconds and then a parent prays aloud to finish the prayer time.⁶⁵

These are helpful suggestions especially for families just beginning to practice family worship. Simplicity and variety should characterize family prayer.

Singing

Though it may not have occurred to some to do so, singing has typically accompanied Reformation and Puritan influenced forms of family worship. God has given humanity a voice primarily so that it may be lifted up to His praise. David wrote, “Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name” (Ps 30:4). This is just as true in family worship as it is in public or private worship. Matthew Henry said, “They that pray in the family do well; they that pray and read the Scriptures do better; but they that pray, and read, and sing do best of all.”⁶⁶ Family worship can exist

⁶⁴James W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1998), 31.

⁶⁵Kummer, *The Beginners Family Worship Handbook*, 5.

⁶⁶Whitney, *Family Worship*, 39.

without singing, but singing enriches and enlivens the experience, especially for children. Husbands and fathers will do well to lead their families to sing songs of the faith during family worship.

Modern technological advances have added many options for incorporating song of the faith into family worship. Of course, families can still sing without accompaniment perhaps using a hymnal or other song book to assist them in the effort. A parent or child may be able to play a musical instrument sufficiently to enhance the family's singing. Families can easily access recorded music including many resources which are now being produced explicitly as aids for family worship. By all means, Christians should feel free to utilize any or all of these to enhance family worship.

Catechisms

Catechisms have been and should be used with a great deal of freedom. Many have memorized them, others have studied them, and some have merely read through them. While catechisms are more effective when used several times per week, a helpful historical practice is to work through them systematically with children once a week. Presbyterians provide a helpful model.

In old Presbyterian families, it has been a usage to connect the catechetical instruction of children and servants with the domestic worship of the Lord's day [sic] evening There is a propriety in having at least one hour of the week in which the Christian parent may take the place of a solemn instructor in divine things, and there is a seemliness in connecting these lessons with the season of devotion.⁶⁷

⁶⁷Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 81.

Perhaps in a context in which local churches typically do not gather for worship on Lord's Day evenings, a time of catechetical instruction among families would be appropriate. Perhaps families could prepare for the Lord's Day by catechizing on Saturday evening.

It should be remembered that the more often catechisms are used the more effective they become. Parents may well review the catechisms several times per week in order to facilitate a child's understanding of the material. Time and regularity are necessary in order for children to grasp catechetical instruction. However a family chooses to use them, catechisms can prove very helpful and the practice of using them at least once a week is commendable.

General Principles

A few helpful principles will likely assist parents to establish and faithfully lead family worship. Donald S. Whitney suggests three principles for family worship, "Brevity Regularity Flexibility."⁶⁸ To these three, variety may be added as an important principle for parents to bear in mind. Though other principles could be mentioned, these four should prove especially helpful for parents.

Brevity. Family worship does not need to be, indeed, it should not be a long and boring exercise. Children should not be made to suffer through a time of devotion to the Lord. Rather, the words of James Alexander should be heeded, "Let them find it short, savory, simple, plain, tender, and heavenly."⁶⁹ With gentleness, love, and grace,

⁶⁸Whitney, *Family Worship*, 41-42.

⁶⁹Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 113.

fathers should lead their families to worship the living God in simple and direct ways.

Brevity is an important principle to follow when leading family worship

Regularity. Families would be wise to establish a regular time for family worship as best fits their schedule. George Hammond suggested:

As to the time of family worship, it may doubtless be performed at any convenient hour, either settled or varied In both places and times for family worship, certainly the most convenient are to be chosen, those that are most agreeable to the solemnity of religious worship and most free from disturbances and distraction.⁷⁰

Thus, families should choose the time that is most convenient for them and seek to be as consistent as possible, while expecting to be flexible as occasion may demand. Many have found meal time to be especially conducive for family worship. James Alexander writes, “Hence some have thought they found advantage in calling together the family immediately before or immediately after the evening meal.”⁷¹ Whatever the time may be, families should endeavor to be as consistent as possible.

Flexibility. Once consistency is established, flexibility will become necessary. Often parents will be forced to do what they can. It could not have been said more wisely than Richard Baxter, when he said, “do what you can, especially in prayer, and [leave] the rest to another time; but pretend not necessity against any duty, when it is but unwillingness or negligence.”⁷² Better to pray than to do nothing, but care must be taken than deception does not convince our hearts to make a necessity out of an excuse. At a

⁷⁰George Hammond, *The Case for Family Worship* (Orlando: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2005), 16.

⁷¹Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 111.

⁷²Baxter, *Christian Directory*, 467.

minimum families should pray together and remembering the maxim “do what can” can help leaders recall the principle of flexibility.

Variety. Parents should feel free to adopt creative variety in their times of family worship. Creativity can add spice to family worship that can prove to be a great encouragement to parents and children.

Like a great meal, family worship should also have color and variety. We hope this guide will be a great starting point, but be creative. Don’t get stuck in the rut of simply reading stories. Act them out. Draw and paint. Let a sock puppet tell the story. Adding variety to our time of family worship helps them become times of discovery, and it helps keep our kids’ interest as well.⁷³

Though none of these ideas are necessary for faithfulness in family worship, they may prove attractive and helpful for many families. Many families have found it helpful to incorporate the reading of great Christian books into their times of family worship. *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, for example, is a Christian classic perfectly suited for use with children. For those who are so inclined, creativity in family worship should certainly be employed.

Conclusion

As important as family worship is, the priority of congregational worship must not be forgotten. Whitney emphasizes, “If you really want to worship God, you can never do better than worshiping Him where His word is preached and Christ is

⁷³Robert Plummer and Jared Kennedy, *Sojourn Kids Family Worship Guide* [on-line]; accessed 27 May 2011; available from <http://sojournkids.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/fwg-age-by-age-revision.pdf>; Internet.

proclaimed.”⁷⁴ God has ordained the local church as the place in which His word and gospel should be proclaimed until the end of the age. Moreover, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper were directly instituted for the church, not the family. Attempting to replace congregational worship with family worship would be a grave mistake.

Nevertheless, family worship has historically been understood as one of the most important duties man has to God. In a variety of ways, Christians have always sought to bring their children to God by leading them to worship Him at home. Family worship has proven to be one of the most fruitful spiritual disciplines to which Christians can be devoted. As a biblical discipline, it holds the promise of functioning as a means of grace to children, a pillar for the church, and an aid to the culture at large.

The relationship of family worship and revival remains a mysterious tension. Perhaps there is no need to establish a sharp dichotomy between family worship as a means to revival for which humans are responsible and family worship as evidence of revival which God’s alone can accomplish. Christians have been given the Great Commission to take to the nations. Family worship may be understood as intrinsic in the command, “Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:20). Thus, one may agree with Matthew Henry that in family worship, “Here the reformation must begin.”⁷⁵

⁷⁴Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 77.

⁷⁵Whitney, *Family Worship*, 28.

Simultaneously, family worship practiced widely may prove to be a fruit of God's work in revival. It may be discovered that a "church is already in a state of revival when all its praying families are thus engaged in sincerity."⁷⁶ This perspective rightly recognizes that the broad establishment of family worship is evidence of more than mere human endeavor. Indeed, it is evidence of the hand of God Himself. The Holy Spirit is at work to bring families back to the worship of God the Father through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Developing the spiritual discipline of family worship brings us directly into the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately, God is worthy of the praise families give Him in daily worship. Family worship promises great fruit in the lives of children, but the greatest motivation should be the glory of God. Whitney says,

Having your family in a good, Bible-teaching local church is crucial to Christian parenting. But this is not enough for conveying to your children all you want to teach them about God and your beliefs. Moreover, it is unlikely that exposure to the church once or twice a week will impress your children enough with the greatness and glory of God that they will want to pursue Him once they leave home. This is why family worship is so important. But even more importantly, God *deserves* to be worshiped daily in our homes by our families.⁷⁷

Family worship represents an activity filled with potential for Christian families. The discipline is a return to the true purpose for which humanity exists: the worship of the Triune God.

⁷⁶Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 88.

⁷⁷Whitney, *Family Worship*, 9. Emphasis original.

CHAPTER 4
THE STORY OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

This chapter chronicles the implementation of the project to develop the spiritual discipline of family worship at Calvary Baptist Church in Madison, Indiana. The project consisted of two major aspects: a series of five sermons and a six-week class. The five-sermon series began with the recruitment and survey of a focus group, involved preaching sermons especially related to the topic of family worship, and concluded with a post-survey of the focus group. Also, the six-week class involved a focus group, pre-surveys, teaching material germane to the topic of family worship, and concluded with post-surveys of the focus group. Each of these particular aspects of the project is described in this paper.

The project was implemented in view of the stated goals of the project. First, the project sought to increase the practice of family worship. Second, the project attempted to increase the level of spiritual leadership of husbands and fathers in their homes. Third, the project aims to encourage the use of the primary elements of family worship: Bible reading, prayer, and singing. The fourth and final goal of the project was for me to grow personally in the leadership of family worship in my own home. While the sermons and teaching materials were directed at achieving these goals, surveying the focus group was an attempt to measure the success of the project in achieving them.

Sermon Series

Recruiting Participants

The project began in earnest with the recruitment of participants for the initial phase of the project, which was the sermon series. Twenty men were recruited to participate in the sermon series through a variety of tools, including e-mail, phone calls, text messages, and personal invitations. Every man received an e-mail explaining the nature of the group meeting, along with the time and place. A follow-up contact was then made either by phone, text, or personal invitation. Of the 20 men who were recruited, 11 agreed to participate.

Focus Group/Pre-Survey

The group met after church services on Sunday, August 7, 2011 for about forty-five minutes. The 11 men who participated were diverse in terms of age, spiritual maturity, and station in life. While most of the men were husbands and fathers; one man was single. Two of the men, whose children are grown, were grandfathers. Most of them were fathers of elementary-age children, while one participant has children in middle and high school.

The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the men to the nature of the project, encourage participation in the five-week sermon series, administer the initial survey, and to pray for the project. After thanking the men for their involvement, a brief explanation of the nature of the project was given. The men were asked to commit to being present for each of the five sermons related to family worship. The survey was administered, which each man completed. Following the survey, the diversity of the

group promoted lively discussion on the topic of family worship. The meeting was closed in prayer for the men, their families, and our congregation.

Sermon 1 Synopsis

The first sermon introduced the theme of the series, as well as, the specific idea of devoting the home to God. Entitled “Your Home: Devoted to the One True God,” this sermon was based on Deuteronomy 6:1-9. The sermon examined Moses’ call to the people of Israel to worship the Lord alone once they crossed over the Jordan into the Promised Land. Various theological elements including monotheism, the exclusivity of Christ, and a holistic view of man, were explained in the sermon.

While acknowledging the importance of worshipping the Lord in both corporate and private contexts, the sermon stressed the passages that emphasize worshipping God in the home. The congregation was challenged to apply the words of the text by resolving to make the home a place where children are taught to value God as the greatest of all treasures. This challenge was tempered by an acknowledgement that only Christ lived a life of full devotion to the Father, that his death paved the way for the forgiveness of our sins, and his resurrection made his power available for living a new life of worship in private, in public, and in the home.

Sermon 2 Synopsis

The second sermon continued the theme of the series, “Devoting Your Home to the Lord”. Entitled, “Worship God: A Call to Families,” this sermon was an exposition of Joshua 24:14-15. In this text, Joshua called the nation of Israel to worship Yahweh. At the conclusion of his career as the leader of the nation, Joshua left a stirring

challenge to spiritual faithfulness for the young nation as they continued to settle the Promised Land. Though the peoples of the land worshipped many gods, Joshua insisted that Israel should worship Yahweh alone.

Significantly, Joshua vowed that he and his household would reserve worship for Yahweh exclusively. He declared, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh 24:15). Though this text does not provide specific principles for family worship, it does establish that family worship was a central commitment for an important biblical figure. Joshua is put forth as a model of piety. The congregation, especially heads of households, was encouraged to follow his example by devoting themselves and their families to worship God alone.

Sermon 3 Synopsis

The third sermon in the series, entitled “God’s Glory: Unhidden from the Coming Generations,” was an exposition of Psalm 78:1-8. The sermon continued to establish the biblical foundations for worshipping God in the home. Two important ideas regarding family worship were stressed. First, fathers were encouraged to assume spiritual leadership in their homes, especially by leading family worship. Asaph wrote that God “commanded our fathers to teach their children” (Ps 78:5). Second, families were encouraged to have hope for their homes and to disciple their children “that they should set their hope in God” (Ps 78:7). Ultimate hope for families, it was emphasized, lay not in the moral resolve to build better homes but in the sufficient sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Sermon 4 Synopsis

The fourth sermon of the series, entitled “Children Unprovoked: A Father’s Solemn Duty,” expounded on Ephesians 6:4. This sermon, drawn from the New Testament, was primarily directed to husbands and fathers, though not to the exclusion of mothers entirely. Fundamentally, the message was a call for fathers to assume their God-given role as spiritual leaders in their homes, especially in their children’s lives. Through both temperament and tongue, fathers exert tremendous influence on the spiritual development of their children. The discipline of family worship itself was presented as merely one way among many of applying this verse to life.

Sermon 5 Synopsis

The fifth and final sermon in the series was entitled “Renewing Family Faith.” Taken from Hebrews 11, the sermon considered the role of family worship in the lives of important biblical characters, men such as Abraham and Noah. Husbands and fathers were exhorted to follow Noah’s example to live before God with “reverent fear” (Heb 11:7). As Noah “built an altar to the Lord and called upon his name,” families were challenged to set aside a particular place to worship God in their home, perhaps a dining room table or some other specific meeting place.

Focus Group/Post-Survey

Following the completion of the five-sermon series, the focus group reconvened for the administration of the post-series questionnaire. The survey was the same as that administered to the group prior to the series. The purpose of comparing

answers before and after the series is to glean information about the effectiveness of the sermons for accomplishing some of the goals of the project.

Six-Week Class

The second phase of the project was a six-week discipleship class on the topic of family worship. The class began with the recruitment of participants who functioned as a survey pool both before and after the class.

Recruiting Participants

Throughout the sermon series, participants were recruited for the six-week class. The typical communication mechanisms of the church were used. These included: weekly bulletins, morning worship announcements, and morning worship PowerPoint announcements. In addition to these, several men were personally invited. Also, mention of the class was made during the sermon series, and men were encouraged to participate.

Focus Group/Pre-Survey

The initial meeting consisted of a focus group and surveying of participants. The group met on Wednesday, September 21, 2011. Discussion included the topic of family worship and the schedule of the class. Also, the group completed two surveys. These instruments were designed to measure the participants' knowledge and practice of family worship. Both surveys were used after the completion of the class in order to measure change in the understanding and practice of participants regarding family worship.

Class 1 Synopsis

The first class introduced a brief history of family worship. Specifically, the group was introduced to the practice of family worship in the Reformation, Puritan, and Contemporary Evangelical periods. Participants were provided with a copy of the 2010 Southern Baptist resolution on family worship. Additionally, participants were lead to read (a passage of Scripture related to family worship), pray, and sing as a way of modeling for them how to lead their families in worship. This practice continued in each of the remaining classes.

Class 2 Synopsis

The second class involved a brief survey of the historical and contemporary use of catechisms in relation to the practice of family worship. The class again began with reading a passage of Scripture related to family worship, prayer, and the singing of a hymn. Following this, a description of catechetical instruction was given. The point was emphasized that the use of a catechism is supplemental to the essential elements of family worship: Bible reading, praying, and singing songs of the faith.

The class then examined the use of catechisms in the early church, the Reformation, and among Evangelicals - Baptists particularly - in history and in the present day. Recognizing and using catechisms according to developmental abilities of children was encouraged. The use of catechisms by adults was promoted, especially *The Heidelberg Catechism*, with appropriate doctrinal adjustments for a Baptist context. Participants were each given a copy of *A Catechism for Boys and Girls*.¹ The class was

¹*A Catechism for Boys and Girls* [on-line]; accessed 25 May 2011; available from <http://sojournalkids.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/a-catechism-for-boys-and-girls.pdf>; Internet.

closed with a Scriptural blessing taken from Genesis 48:15-16, “May the God before whom Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been our shepherd to this day, and who has delivered us from all harm – bless you and make His name live on in you and in your children after you. Amen!”

Class 3 Synopsis

The third class consisted of a study of three leaders of church history. The lives of Martin Luther, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Spurgeon were considered respectively. The class began with a continued effort to model family worship by reading Scripture, praying, and singing a stanza of a hymn. Participants were instructed to learn from historical figures though recognizing that none of these men were infallible. The objective is to personalize lessons from the lives of these men rather than viewing their practice as an indisputable pattern. The meeting closed with a Scriptural blessing taken from Galatians 6:18.

Class 4 Synopsis

In the fourth class, the basic elements of family worship were examined. While freedom and flexibility should be maintained in terms of incorporating other elements into family worship, Bible reading, prayer, and singing songs of the faith were submitted as the essential elements of family worship. Scripture support was provided for each of these. Also, suggestions were made in terms of the practical application of these elements for children of various ages. A model was once again given by reading Scripture, praying, and singing a hymn at the beginning of the class.

Class 5 Synopsis

The fifth class of the project encouraged certain practical suggestions for the practice of family worship as a spiritual discipline. The four principles for family worship were: consistency, flexibility, brevity, and variety. Participants were encouraged to apply these principles to their family worship efforts. The group experienced a profitable discussion regarding these matters. Modeling family worship continued with Scripture, prayer, and song.

Class 6 Synopsis

In the sixth class participants were encouraged to use scriptural blessings as a part of their family worship. The patriarch Jacob (Gen 49) and other biblical examples were used as support for this practice. The project was adjusted to include this material. Biblical support for family worship, rather than constituting a single class, was included in the modeling of family worship incorporated into each class. Thus, more time was available to consider the historical dimensions of family worship, as well as the Scriptural blessing.

Focus Group/Post-Survey

The final meeting for the project was held Wednesday, November 16, 2011. The focus group, consisting of participants in the study, discussed concluding thoughts regarding family worship and the impact of the project itself. Discussion included the relationship of family worship to revival and to the Great Commission, particularly Jesus' words in Matthew 28:18-20. Also, maintaining the priority of worship in the local church even while developing the discipline of family worship was emphasized.

Finally, post-surveys were disseminated and completed. The information these instruments provide will be used to evaluate the project. Additionally, participants were given opportunity to provide verbal feedback regarding the project. The group expressed appreciation for the class, especially for the fellowship with each other the meetings encouraged, the resources that were provided, and the spiritual benefit of the class. The group meeting, and the project, concluded with prayer to God to establish each man as a spiritual leader in his home.

Conclusion

Thus concludes the story of the project to develop the spiritual discipline of family worship at Calvary Baptist Church of Madison, Indiana. The sermon series was implemented very much as intended. A focus group was surveyed before and after the series. The six-week class was implemented with some adjustment. Adjustments involved reviewing biblical foundations in weekly devotional times and including a class on the topic of scriptural blessings. Participants served as a focus group that was surveyed before and after the class.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

In an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of the project, several factors will be considered. The important factors of the project can be placed into two groups: the project itself and the impact of the project on me personally. The project itself will be evaluated according to its purpose, its goals, its strengths, and its weaknesses, including what I would do differently if I were to do the project again. In terms of the impact of the project on me personally, consideration will be given to what I learned theologically and practically, along with any further considerations for the project. This evaluation will be the final step of the project, and it will serve as its conclusion.

Evaluation of the Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to develop the spiritual discipline of family worship at Calvary Baptist Church in Madison, Indiana. A review of the research data leads to the conclusion that this purpose was fulfilled to some degree. Certainly, family worship has been taught, and participants have learned about family worship as a discipline. Research data reflects that many of the participants were already aware of the importance of family worship, and they were engaging in family worship at some level. The project was not the first effort to teach on this important subject in the life of Calvary Baptist Church nor will it be the last. The nature of the spiritual disciplines, indeed the

nature of the Christian life, is such that important truths and practices must continually be taught and pursued. God willing, the project did develop the practice of family worship as a discipline in our congregation but that does not mean that the work is complete because family worship will never be complete until the whole family of God's people is united in worship around the throne of God forever.

Evaluation of the Goals of the Project

The first goal of the project was to increase the practice of family worship in the homes of the members. Research data suggests that this goal was achieved among participants in the project. One research statement is "Family worship is an important aspect of my Christian faith" (Survey 2: Question 2). Pre-testing found 40 percent of respondents answering "agree" or "strongly agree" to this statement. Post-testing found 70 percent of respondents answering "agree" or "strongly agree." Admittedly, the survey pool is not a large one. Establishing family worship as a spiritual discipline within the church body will require ongoing discipleship efforts. Among the participants in the project, however, there is evidence that efforts to lead family worship did increase.

Data suggesting an appreciation for family worship is encouraging. Yet, other data suggests that the project may have had what appears to be an opposite effect upon some participants. One survey statement was "I am interested in learning more about family worship" (Survey 1: Question 6). To this statement, 0 percent of participants of responded "strongly disagree" on the pre-test, while 30 percent of respondents answered "strongly disagree" on the post-test. Why the retrograde in interest to learn more? It could be reasoned from these responses that by the conclusion of the project some participants had simply heard all they wanted to hear about family worship. A distinction

can be made between appreciating family worship and interest to learn more about family worship. Perhaps these participants will employ what they have learned about family worship despite having no desire “in learning more” about family worship. Further, after a break from the topic perhaps these participants will discover a renewed interest in learning more. Nevertheless, the data suggests that in the wake of the project some have lost interest in learning about family worship at this time.

The second goal was to increase the leadership of “husbands/fathers” in family worship. The focus group consisted entirely of men. Though one man was single, all of the others were husbands and fathers. An analysis of the research data confirms that this goal was achieved to some degree. Participants were asked to respond to the statement: “Our family reads Scripture together” (Survey 3: Question 1). Whereas 50 percent of respondents responded “never” to this statement on the pre-test, 0 percent responded “never” on the post-test. This data is very encouraging. At the conclusion of the project, every participant was reading Scripture with his family at least once a week if not more often.

While survey results indicated a growing participation in family worship, the recognition that family worship is an important means of discipleship did not appear to change. One survey question asked, “Family worship is a primary means of discipleship for my children or grandchildren” (Survey 1: Question 5). There was no significant change regarding the answers to this question. Both the pre-test and the post-test found 40 percent responding “strongly agree” to this statement. This response may indicate a failure to appropriately relate family worship and discipleship. Care could have been

taken to instruct participants more definitely that leading family worship is an important means of discipling one's children or grandchildren.

The third goal was to encourage members of the church to use all three of the essential elements of family worship (Bible reading, prayer, and song). Again, research data suggests some movement in a positive direction concerning this goal. Participants were asked to respond to the statement: "Our family sings psalms, hymns, or Christian songs together" (Survey 3: Question 3). While 50 percent of respondents answered "never" on the pre-test, 0 percent answered "never" on the post-test. This means that at the conclusion of the project every participant claimed to be singing with his family at least once a week. This data is evidence of growth in what is likely the most difficult element of family worship to lead.

The fourth and final goal of the project was for me to grow personally in leading my own family in worship and in serving as an example before the church. My own progress in the discipline of family worship was noted in regular staff meetings. A question concerning the practice of family worship was added to a list of accountability questions. We asked, "Have you been leading family worship?" And, "How many times a week do you initiate family worship?" My responses to this question reveal mixed results. In the early stages of the project, I responded that I was leading my family in worship at least 5 times a week. In later stages of the project, I was leading my family in worship 3 to 4 times per week. There are likely many factors that contribute to this apparent decrease. Suffice it to say that there is much room for growth concerning my own practice of family worship and the example of godliness that I set personally before the congregation.

Strengths of the Project

During the final focus group, participants noted that two of the most helpful aspects of the project were the resources provided and gathering with other men for a spiritual purpose. The men seemed to appreciate especially the resources suggested during the project. Articles, catechisms, books, and music, were extremely helpful to the men in their efforts to grow in the discipline of family worship. Biblically-sound resources reflect an effort “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph 4:12). Recommending additional resources in the future is something that can be done to continue the development of family worship as a discipline even after the project is complete.

Also, participants noted the importance and helpfulness of gathering with other men to discuss spiritual matters. It is evident in our church that men tend not to gather for the study and discussion of spiritual matters. It requires some effort to exhort our men to participate in a small group study. The reward, however, is well worth the effort. Paul encouraged all believers to “flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (2 Tim 2:22). Fellowship with other believers is essential for all Christians. Husbands and fathers, like all Christians, are greatly encouraged and strengthened when they gather with other men to discuss biblical teaching and their efforts to practice righteousness. These kinds of gatherings are not only helpful but necessary, and the effort must be continued long after the project is complete.

Weaknesses of the Project

The greatest concern I have for the project pertains to its relationship to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Is the project sufficiently gospel oriented? This is a challenge for any of the spiritual disciplines. How does the practice of this discipline rest in the gospel of Jesus Christ? In other words, there is balance between calling men to lead their families and calling men to rest in the only One who leads his family perfectly.

It is important to call believers to strenuous spiritual effort. Husbands/fathers must lead the discipline of family worship. The practice of this discipline is an effort to obey the words of the Apostle Paul who commanded believers to “train yourself for godliness” (1 Tim 4:7). That is to say, the pursuit of the spiritual disciplines is an effort to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). Leading family worship is an effort at working out one’s own salvation, and it is good and right to exhort men to fulfill this important duty.

Yet, no man will ever provide infallible spiritual leadership for his family. Ultimately, every man must trust Christ who alone is infallible. Jesus Christ is the only perfect man, and he gave his life as an atoning sacrifice for men who fall short of his standard of moral perfection. As Paul again wrote, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). The gospel centers on the sufficient sacrifice of Christ in the place of sinners. Apart from a sufficient gospel orientation, an emphasis on a spiritual discipline can lead to a works approach to Christianity.

What I Would Do Differently

What I would do differently relates directly to the greatest weakness of the project. In retrospect, I would make an intentional effort to more clearly emphasize the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel could have more clearly emphasized by preaching a sermon on the topic of the gospel as it relates to family worship. I might preach a sermon emphasizing the balance between the sufficient work of Christ for fathers and the insufficient work of fathers for Christ. A class on a similar theme might also be helpful.

There are spiritual hazards associated with learning about and seeking to develop a spiritual discipline like family worship. One of the hazards is the potential for guilt. It would not be difficult for a man to become guilt ridden regarding his failure to lead family worship. In fact, no man has or will lead his family to worship as he ought. As James wrote, “we all stumble in many ways” (Jas 3:2). In fact, one is more likely to struggle with guilt as he learns more about a particular discipline. Rightly understanding the gospel is critical for dealing with this kind of guilt. The gospel reminds the believer that a right standing with God is not the result of faithfully leading family worship, but of trusting in Jesus as the only man who did not stumble in any way.

A second hazard associated with the pursuit of a discipline like family worship is that of self-righteousness. Like the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, the hazard is some might trust “in themselves that they [are] righteous” (Luke 18:9). As one begins to perform a discipline, a subtle tendency is to measure one’s standing with God by the discipline. One could easily be found thinking, “Lord, I thank you that I am not like other men . . . I lead my family to worship five times a week” (Luke 18:11-12). The gospel must be appropriated with urgency in order to combat the hazard of self-

righteousness. The gospel emphasizes that works of righteousness will never be the ground of a right standing with God. Rather than being self-righteous for leading family worship, one should seek to be like the tax collector who cried, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13). If I could do it over, I would find ways to emphasize more the sufficient work of Jesus Christ in the place of fallen husband and fathers.

Theological Reflections

This project reinforced the truth that God has revealed himself as a father. Not only is God the father of the Lord Jesus Christ, but believers receive “grace . . . and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:3). Through faith, believers are adopted into the family of God and made his own precious children. In part, family worship is about earthly men seeking to be faithful fathers to their children. As Christian men grow in this important discipline, they are increasingly reflecting the image of the true God who is always a faithful Father to his own children.

The fatherhood of God is a great comfort to God’s people. The example of the men who participated in the project was deeply humbling. It became abundantly clear that these men love their families dearly. The challenges associated with rearing their children are a great burden to godly parents. Christian parents realize that their children have great potential for both wisdom and folly. The saying is, “A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother” (Prov 10:1). Through the project, it became much more apparent that Christian parenting involves both gospel effort and gospel trust. By God’s grace, believers must dutifully engage in the many demands of parenting, while at the same time, trusting God for the lives of their children. No parent

can guarantee the outcome of their children's lives, but believers parent with hope in the God who holds their children's futures in his own hands.

Thus, the project has affirmed for me the love of God my own Father. As I spent time with the men in our group, I grew to love them more deeply. I identified with the burden these men feel for their children and for growing as a Christian father. If I love these men and feel compassion for their burdens, how much more does God love and feel compassion for them? It was John who wrote, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 John 3:1). What a joy to know that God has loved and adopted each of these men as his own child. He has given them Christ, the gospel, and grace for salvation. How much more will he give them everything they need to husband, to father, and to lead family worship?

Personal Reflections

The project has been a profoundly humbling experience. It was tremendously encouraging to give men instruction and encouragement in their roles as spiritual leaders in their homes. Nevertheless, it was humbling to track my own progress with the pastoral staff. In the midst of a busy life, I am called to "set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim 4:12). The effort to set the believers an example requires great adaptation on my part. My own life changed dramatically during the project. Our family added a child through adoption, our children became much more involved in extra-mural activities, and the project added to a busy ministry schedule in the church. I have learned that life involves great change, and as life changes, I too must change.

Different seasons of life require flexibility and adjustment on my part.

Solomon wrote, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven” (Eccl 3:1). At the beginning of the project, my conceptions of leading family worship mostly involved small children. By the project’s conclusion, I realized that leading older children presented a new set of challenges. Several of the participants in the class discussed the challenges they faced in leading children who are older than mine. I recognize that I stand in desperate need of God’s grace for fathering and for leading family worship, especially as my children approach their teen years.

Therefore, it is vital that I continue to grow in my example before the believers in our congregation. The congregation does not need to see in me a perfect example of fatherhood, but they do need to see growth. The Apostle Paul said, “Practice these things, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress” (1 Tim 4:15). Family worship is one of the many disciplines in which I must continue to make progress throughout my life. There is no stopping place. I must continually obey Paul’s instruction to pastors, “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim 4:16).

I have learned much from the project. The project represents a tremendous amount of work and preparation. It has been an effort to instruct and to encourage the church, specifically a group of men, in the important matter of leading their families to worship God. Among the most important lessons for me, is that my role as a pastor is not merely to disseminate content to my listeners. Rather, an intrinsic part of my calling is to give people my life. It is written, “So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you

had become very dear to us” (1 Thess 2:8). This project became more than simply an effort to seriously study and share with others the findings of my research. It became an experience of sharing myself with others, of sharing my own soul with them. The project reinforced the importance of my calling to share the gospel and to share my life with those whom God has called me to shepherd.

Conclusion

Thus, the project has concluded and is complete. Years in the making, many months of research, and 15 intensive weeks of preaching and teaching have now come to an end. Others will determine to some degree the value of the effort. God himself will ultimately weigh, measure, and judge its worth as a fulfillment of his calling upon my life. The project has been a marathon that carries with it a sense of relief and fulfillment upon its completion.

Yet, there is another sense of something that remains yet undone. In a very real way the project has only just begun. Hebrews 12:1 states, “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” Sharing the gospel, teaching others about family worship, and giving my life to others will never end so long as I live. Perhaps above all, the project has taught me that I must endure to the very end. I must endure not to the end of a project but to end of my life and my ministry. It is a joy to realize that God has granted me the privilege of laboring in a worthy calling that will not conclude until my life is finished.

APPENDIX 1

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

I. This survey is to be completed by a focus group both before and after hearing the five sermons on family worship.

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your practice regarding family worship. This research is being conducted by Mike Hamby for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer the questions before and after a series of sermons on the topic of family worship. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

Using the following scale, please circle the number that best corresponds to your feelings in response to the question:

- 1 = Strongly agree
- 2 = Agree
- 3 = Uncertain
- 4 = Disagree
- 5 = Strongly disagree

1. I have a clear understanding of family worship.

1 2 3 4 5

2. Family worship is an important aspect of my Christian faith.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Family worship is a spiritual duty for every Christian family.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Family worship should be led primarily by fathers.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Family worship is a primary means of discipleship for my children or my grandchildren.

1 2 3 4 5

6. I am interested in learning more about family worship.

1 2 3 4 5

II. This survey to be completed by participants before and after the six-week class.

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your practice regarding family worship. This research is being conducted by Mike Hamby for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer the questions before and after participation in a class on the topic of family worship. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

Using the following scale, please write the number that best corresponds to your feelings in response to the following statements:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

___ 1. I have a clear understanding of family worship.

___ 2. I know how to lead family worship.

___ 3. Our family participates regularly in family worship.

___ 4. Family worship is a spiritual duty for every Christian family.

___ 5. Our family reads Scripture regularly together at least five times a week.

___ 6. Family worship is important for the spiritual life of Calvary Baptist Church.

___ 7. I am aware of several important resources on the topic of family worship.

___ 8. Family worship should be suspended if guests or visitors are in the home.

___ 9. I have a clear understanding of the meaning of catechism.

III. This survey to be completed by participants before and after the six-week class.

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your practice regarding family worship. This research is being conducted by Mike Hamby for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer the questions before and after participation in a class on the topic of family worship. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

Using the following scale, please circle the number that best corresponds to your feelings in response to the question:

- 1 = Never
- 2 = 1-2 times a week
- 3 = 3-5 times a week
- 4 = Daily

1. Our family reads Scripture together.

1 2 3 4

2. Our family prays together.

1 2 3 4

3. Our family sings psalms, hymns, or Christian songs together.

1 2 3 4

4. Our family uses a catechism together.

1 2 3 4

APPENDIX 2

SURVEY 1: RESULTS

Question 1: I have a clear understanding of family worship				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	1	10%	4	40%
Agree	2	20%	3	30%
Uncertain	2	20%	0	0%
Disagree	5	50%	2	20%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	1	10%
Conclusion: 40% of respondents moved to agree or strongly agree.				

Question 2: Family worship is an important aspect of my Christian faith.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	1	10%	3	30%
Agree	3	30%	4	40%
Uncertain	5	50%	1	10%
Disagree	1	10%	1	10%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	1	10%
Conclusion: 30% of respondents moved to agree or strongly agree.				

Question 3: Family worship is a spiritual duty for every Christian family.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	7	70%	6	60%
Agree	1	10%	1	10%
Uncertain	2	20%	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	3	30%
Conclusion: 30% of respondents moved to strongly disagree. This surprising data is inexplicable.				

Question 4: Family worship should be led primarily by fathers.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	4	40%	6	60%
Agree	3	30%	1	10%
Uncertain	2	20%	0	0%
Disagree	1	10%	2	2%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	1	10%
Conclusion: 20% of respondents moved from uncertain to disagree or strongly disagree. A shift toward strongly agreeing with this statement is consistent with the teaching of the project. It appears that those who were already inclined to agree with the statement became more convinced, while those who were uncertain became less convinced.				

Question 5: Family worship is a primary means of discipleship for my children or grandchildren.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	4	40%	4	40%
Agree	2	20%	1	10%
Uncertain	2	20%	3	30%
Disagree	2	20%	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	2	20%
Conclusion: There was no significant movement.				

Question 6: I am interested in learning more about family worship.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	7	70%	5	50%
Agree	3	30%	2	20%
Uncertain	0	0%	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	3	30%
Conclusion: There was a 30% decrease from agree or strongly agree to strongly disagree.				

APPENDIX 3

SURVEY 2: RESULTS

Question 1: I have a clear understanding of family worship.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	2	18%	7	64%
Agree	4	36%	2	18%
Uncertain	4	36%	1	9%
Disagree	1	9%	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	1	9%
Conclusion: Agree or strongly agree moved from 45% to 82%.				

Question 2: I know how to lead family worship.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	2	18%	6	55%
Agree	3	27%	3	27%
Uncertain	6	55%	1	9%
Disagree	0	0%	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	1	9%
Conclusion: Agree or strongly agree moved from 49% to 82%.				

Question 3: Our family participates regularly in family worship.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	0	0%	3	27%
Agree	6	55%	3	27%
Uncertain	2	18%	2	18%
Disagree	2	18%	3	27%
Strongly Disagree	1	9%	0	0%
Conclusion: Strongly agree moved from 0% to 27%.				

Question 4: Family worship is a spiritual duty for every Christian.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	8	73%	8	73%
Agree	1	9%	1	9%
Uncertain	2	18%	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%	1	9%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	1	9%
Conclusion: Uncertain category fell from 18% to 0%.				

Question 5: Our family reads Scripture regularly together at least five times a week.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	1	9%	3	27%
Agree	1	9%	2	18%
Uncertain	1	9%	2	18%
Disagree	4	36%	4	36%
Strongly Disagree	4	36%	0	0%
Conclusion: Strongly disagree fell from 36% to 0%.				

Question 6: Family worship is important for the spiritual life of Calvary Baptist Church.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	9	82%	8	73%
Agree	1	9%	2	18%
Uncertain	1	9%	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	1	9%
Conclusion: There was no significant movement.				

Question 7: I am aware of several important resources on the topic of family worship.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	0	0%	4	36%
Agree	6	55%	5	45%
Uncertain	4	36%	1	9%
Disagree	1	9%	1	9%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	0	0%
Conclusion: Agree or strongly agree moved from 55% to 82%.				

Question 8: Family worship should be suspended if guests or visitors are in the home.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	0	0%	0	0%
Agree	2	18%	0	0%
Uncertain	3	27%	1	9%
Disagree	3	27%	5	45%
Strongly Disagree	3	27%	5	45%
Conclusion: Disagree or strongly disagree moved from 54% to 90%.				

Question 9: I have a clear understanding of the meaning of catechism.				
Pre-test			Post-test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	45%	8	73%
Agree	4	36%	2	18%
Uncertain	2	18%	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	1	9%
Conclusion: Agree or strongly agree moved from 81% to 91%.				

APPENDIX 4

SURVEY 3: RESULTS

Question 1: Our family reads Scripture together.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1=Never	5	50%	0	0%
2=1-2 times a week	3	30%	3	30%
3=3-5 times a week	1	10%	4	40%
4=Daily	1	10%	3	30%
Conclusion: Category 1 dropped from 50% to 0%.				

Question 2: Our family prays together.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1=Never	2	20%	0	0%
2=1-2 times a week	2	20%	2	2%
3=3-5 times a week	1	10%	2	2%
4=Daily	5	50%	6	60%
Conclusion: Category 2 dropped from 20% to 0%.				

Question 3: Our family sings psalms, hymns, or Christian songs together.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1=Never	5	50%	0	0%
2=1-2 times a week	5	50%	6	60%
3=3-5 times a week	0	0%	2	20%
4=Daily	0	0%	2	20%
Conclusion: Category 1 fell from 50% to 0%.				

Question 4: Our family uses a catechism together.				
Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Possible Responses	Respondents	Percentage	Respondents	Percentage
1=Never	8	80%	3	30%
2=1-2 times a week	2	20%	5	50%
3=3-5 times a week	0	0%	2	20%
4=Daily	0	0%	0	0%
Conclusion: Category 1 fell from 80% to 30%.				

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF FAMILY WORSHIP AT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH OF MADISON, INDIANA

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Donald S. Whitney

This project sought to develop the spiritual discipline of family worship at Calvary Baptist Church. Chapter 1 introduces Calvary Baptist Church and the surrounding community, while establishing the need and rationale for the project. Chapter 2 establishes a biblical and theological basis for the project by considering biblical passages especially pertinent to the topic of family worship. Chapter 3 researches and identifies significant historical and practical issues related to family worship. The findings of this research are employed in the preaching and teaching sections of the project. Chapter 4 chronicles the sermons and classes which constitute the project. Chapter 5 analyzes and evaluates the results of the project and provides theological and personal reflections on the project.

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