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TEACHING AND IMPROVING FAMILY WORSHIP
AT THE MILITARY CHAPEL, PARRIS ISLAND,
SOUTH CAROLINA

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APPROVAL SHEET

TEACHING AND IMPROVING FAMILY WORSHIP
AT THE MILITARY CHAPEL, PARRIS ISLAND,
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PREFACE

It has been a privilege to pursue the Doctor of Ministry in Applied Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The professors' pastoral concern and keen interest in the kingdom of God has been of great encouragement to me throughout the course of study as I have been involved in the kingdom labors our God has set before me. The faithful texts, classroom interaction, and their teaching have had a distinct positive impact on my work.

I am grateful for the commanding officer of the Operational Ministry Center in Norfolk, Virginia, the commanding officers of the Second Recruit Training Battalion and the Headquarters and Service Battalion at Parris Island, South Carolina, and the commanding officer of the Second Marine Regiment at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for granting me the opportunity for additional study. My prayer is that I will be far more useful to the Marines and Sailors of our nation as a result of their investment.

I am most grateful for the dear wife and seven children with whom the Lord has blessed me. Our home has been a laboratory for family worship, and by God's grace manifold blessings have been the result

Patrick Scott Joyner

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to encourage the members of the chapel to improve or establish family worship in their homes in order to perpetuate godliness in themselves and their families for generations to come and to build resiliency in preparation for the demanding aspects of being a military family.

Goals

The project had four goals associated with meeting the intended purpose. The first goal was for the congregation to be persuaded of the biblical mandate to honor God and feed their souls through regular individual and family worship. The thought of having an organized time of family or individual worship outside of the congregational worship was an intimidating idea to many before the project. This feeding of their souls was recognized as much more than having devotional moments, but to also be a time where important direction-giving biblical instruction was discussed and encouraged.

The second goal was for the individuals and families of the chapel to begin having regular worship times in their homes with a view of persevering in it. The project would not be much of a success if we only had family worship for the duration of the special emphasis without the intention and motivation to continue making it a priority.

The third goal was for the congregation of the chapel to begin to enjoy the benefits of having regular family worship by gaining greater joy in the Holy Spirit, deeper assurance of God's love, and more confidence and trust in Christ as the way

ahead. I was very interested in having the worshippers enjoy the resilience and encouragement God intends for them as they make Him a greater priority in their lives. One of the more important benefits was establishing God's ways in the life training of every family member. I hoped to encourage the idea that the home is a place for theological discourse and the robust application of God's principles in the laboratory of life. Matthew Henry believed he had received a thorough education from his father in his home and I encouraged individuals and family leaders to see their responsibility in preparing themselves and others for life, and not merely have devotional moments if they are having home worship.¹ The pre and post-project surveys as well as the family interviews and mentor group conversations provided information on the progress made toward these goals.

The fourth goal was for me to become a better experiential preacher in addressing each member of the congregation and in preparing simple home worship helps associated with the weekly sermon material that will be easily implemented. Part of this goal was that these materials would represent a comprehensive overview of the most important areas that need to be passed on from parents to children and that need to be emphasized in every home even if it is occupied by a single senior citizen.

Ministry Context

The ministry project was carried out in the context of ministry to the United States Marine Corps, specifically through my position as the Chaplain of Headquarters and Service Battalion, Parris Island, South Carolina, and pastor of the Protestant Chapel Community.

¹Matthew Henry, *Family Religion* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2008), 15.

A military chapel lacks the benefit of covenantal membership, biblical leadership, the ability to carry out discipline, and to administer ordinances due to the fact that it is not formally a church. While the congregants can and do bring monetary offerings, these offerings are not used to support a pastor, maintain facilities, or purchase study materials. Chaplains and their assistants carry out ministry and administrative tasks often with little help from the congregation. While many churches are breeding grounds for apathetic congregants, the “subsidized” ministry at a military chapel gives the congregants even less responsibility and they soon realize that they really can show up, do nothing and be considered a “faithful” part of the congregation—even if every single person does nothing but attend on Sunday morning. The chapel situation is similar to a missionary preaching point that gathers about 50 people each week with no other connection to one another, except association with the military subculture.

The Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island typically employs about 4,000 Marines, 1,000 civilians, and may have as many as 6,000 recruits on station at a time. The Marine Corps accomplishes their initial training, known as “Boot Camp,” at two locations: San Diego, California, and Parris Island, South Carolina. These locations are also the headquarters for the West Coast and East Coast recruiting arms of the Marine Corps.

The surrounding area includes a large number of military and civilian retirees, many located in nearby Hilton Head Island. Hilton Head Island is nationally known as one of the premier places to retire. The Recruit Depot at Parris Island has enjoyed a long and illustrious relationship with the community, with the first recruit training occurring in 1915.² Since its inception, about 800,000 recruits have been trained to fight our nation’s

²Marine Corps Recruit Depot, “Parris Island Geography and History” [on-line]; accessed 3 January 2011; available from <https://www.mcrdpi.usmc.mil/SitePages/About%20Parris%20Island.aspx>; Internet.

wars. Beaufort County, which includes the cities of Beaufort, Bluffton, and Hilton Head contains about 155,000 people.³ A typical southern city in many ways, Beaufort is home to many Protestant churches, which all become possible church homes for the military and civilian residents. While the Marine Recruit Worship Services may enjoy literally thousands of worshippers each week, the Permanent Party Chapels, where military members and civilians who are not recruits worship, have attendance numbers measuring a few hundred all together with the Protestant Community averaging about 40 to 50 each week.

There is very little historical information available on the depot chapel at Parris Island, and what information there is seems to regard the construction of the present building. The Recruit Depot at Parris Island has a museum with a historian on staff who gave me access to any records available. The most helpful resource is a 600-page unpublished historical manuscript by Eugene Alvarez, which cites activity in the chapels as far back as the 1920s. Most of the information regards the recruit chapels. The present building, known as the “Depot Chapel,” was built in 1942 as a chapel (many of the other chapels were abandoned cafeterias for recruits). All of the chapels built in those days were designed for a liturgical service and had no baptistry.

The chapel’s growth, from a human standpoint, has been shaped by several factors: (1) the popularity of the assigned chaplain and (2) the worship preferences of those in the military who live in base housing. A number of military retirees who have been at the chapel for around 30 years remember times when the congregation was much larger with more programs. In those days more of the other chaplains on the based

³US Census Bureau, “State and County Quick Facts: Beaufort, South Carolina” [on-line]; accessed 3 January 2011; available from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/45/45013.html>; Internet.

attended, there was a larger military budget to pay what the military calls a “Director of Religious Education,” there was a choir, and there were more periods of fellowship.

This time of growth and encouragement evidently came to an end with an unpopular chaplain, combined with the ebb and flow of military families. Chaplains are typically assigned to the base for three years and may spend only a portion of this time as the chapel pastor, as there is much more for a chaplain to do on a military base than pastor the chapel. Further, the Chaplain Corps, as with the bulk of civilian pastors, has sustained a number of “hits” to what was once a more biblical and faithful evangelicalism. While those faithful believers in the military could count on getting fed spiritually at a chapel in times past, things have changed. This aspect, coupled with nominal Christians who routinely church shop, has changed the face of American evangelicalism and this has greatly impacted the military chapels in the United States as well.⁴

The Protestant Chapel at Parris Island is a congregation led by a single chaplain, also assigned to the largest battalion on the base, Headquarters and Service Battalion. My role in the chapel could probably best be described as that of a small, single staff church. We recently started a Sunday School in which I teach the adults, and my wife typically taught the children. Other than some administrative help with the bulletins and instrumental help in hymn singing, the planning and worship leadership is handled by the assigned chaplain. I also lead other classes in the area of discipleship training, which I offered to the entire base at large. In fact, most of those who are faithful to those studies attend other churches rather than the chapel. These classes have included in the past: biblical parenting, spiritual leadership, biblical theology, systematic theology,

⁴David Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 36.

decision making, setting biblical goals, apologetics, and the catechism.

The vast majority of my time for the chapel was spent in sermon preparation. Prior to the implementation of the project sermon series, I preached a sermon on each book of the Bible, alternating between the Old and New Testaments. My goal in this was to address the prevailing lack of biblical literacy and encourage the congregation with the unity of the Scriptures, especially in the area of God's plan of redemption for humanity. Working through the entire Bible in a relatively short period of time assisted the congregation in receiving the idea of the importance of the concept of family worship, particularly in the area of their responsibility in bringing the Bible's teaching to their families in a way that addresses the culture relevantly.

Rationale

Several reasons drove this project: God is worthy of being worshipped in the home with routine; God's Word ultimately institutes some form of family worship; and implementing family worship must accompany any project to reverse the decline of the church, spiritual ignorance, and the demise of society.⁵ The holiness of God, the overarching aspect of his character, should shake any believer into sobriety about the casual way the things of God are handled, or not handled in our homes.⁶ Implementing the basic teachings of the Bible and calling people to biblical faith and repentance is a major task of the church.

If one were to compare the teaching of the church to a building project, many ministers make some progress in building on the Lord's Day with their congregations,

⁵Jerry Marcellino, *Rediscovering the Lost Treasure of Family Worship*, (Laurel, MS: Audubon, 1996), 2.

⁶R. C. Sproul, *Holiness* (Lake Mary, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2010), 6.

only to have it torn down through the week. The destructive influences of the world coupled with apathetic listening serves to undo much of the potential spiritual progress, which requires the same work to be done again. Families can go beyond merely trying to maintain their spiritual condition and also make progress by implementing a short time of teaching and prayer in their daily routines.

Worship in the home during the week is foundational to any enduring progress made in the area of godliness, and families should expect that their children will come to faith through these times of devotion. It cannot be overstated that family worship is a priority, even though many homes, even minister's homes, have not implemented the practice. Much of modern youth ministry has deeply and negatively impacted the parents' understanding of their responsibility regarding the religious training of their children, which has had an adverse effect on the leadership of fathers in homes for family worship.⁷ One of the consequences, perhaps unintended, of the contemporary, multi-staffed church has been that parents have become convinced that they are incapable of spiritually training their children. Aided by a national feeling that only "professionals" can teach on any level, parents have been convinced that somehow they serve their children best by leaving the teaching to "trained professionals." The result has been an ever-enlarging gulf between parents and children. Another unintended consequence is that more and more one can easily get the impression that church and religious instruction is primarily for children and that adults need not concern themselves with making lifelong spiritual progress. Further, many church members believe that the responsibility for this training is primarily the responsibility of the church and not the individual, thus rejecting God's calling for all to grow up in grace (2 Pet 3:18).

⁷Christopher Schlect, *Critique of Modern Youth Ministry* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 1995), 19.

Establishing the father and husband as teacher and bringing family members together for concise, meaningful devotional times with applicable teaching may seem underwhelming and simplistic to a space age, high technology society, however, the unadorned routine of family worship has always been seen as the bedrock foundational step in building a multi-generational legacy of God-followers.

Definitions and Limitations

There were a number of limitations in the project, the most important of which was the fact that I had a limited amount of time with the congregation and the Marine battalion I served. While at Parris Island, I had two separate assignments involving two different Marine battalions and several different worship congregations. My assignment to the permanent party Protestant congregation was the most stable I expect for my entire chaplain career, so I had a very narrow time allotment that worked for the project. I do not expect to have the opportunity to be a chapel pastor to a military congregation again. Another limitation was that since the chapel is not a “church” in the complete sense of the word, I was limited in the time I had for formal training in the area of family worship to the actual worship service. The bulk of the teaching took the form of sermonic material, which required a more robust printed aid since every aspect of the training I needed to do in preparation for actually “doing family worship” was not completely suited to the Sunday morning sermon. The primary delimitation was the scope of the project, which was the chapel community. I had a number of people who attended my theological studies and parenting classes who were members of other congregations that were interested in this emphasis on family worship, but the thrust of the project was for the chapel.

I worked with four segments of people in the congregation and asked them to assist me in bettering the implementation of the project by giving ongoing

recommendations. I hope that they felt some freedom to be critical of my methods and courageous enough to make helpful recommendations on the project. My goal in this was to choose those who represent each major portion of the congregation: a retired widow, a middle-aged couple with no children, a family with multiple children of various ages, and a family with very young children.

CHAPTER 2
THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR
TEACHING AND IMPROVING
FAMILY WORSHIP

God's Word establishes an urgent call to families to recognize the part they play in leading the next generation to godliness. Philip Lancaster is not alone in declaring that the "national crisis is a consequence of the crisis of the home."¹ He goes on to say that the crisis in the home is a crisis in male leadership. Doubtless, the family is the basic building block of society, and therefore one must look to the family to address the national crisis. The United States was characterized by virtue, liberty, and power, and has fallen to be characterized by corruption, selfishness, and impotence.² America was once the world's creditor and has become the world's largest debtor. How sobering and disappointing to consider where the nation has come from and where it is now.

In the Bible, God directs families to create cultures in their homes that reflect His character. Homes that reflect God's character will in turn impact others around them and involve themselves in "expanding the garden" or bringing the gospel to the nations as introduced in Genesis 1:28. This chapter will consider key passages through the Scriptures that provide real help in assisting families desiring to live in such a way as to increase their usefulness in gospel labors and increase their ability to enjoy God and

¹Philip Lancaster, *Family Man, Family Leader* (San Antonio: Vision, 2003), 16.

²*Ibid.*, 11.

glorify Him. Several passages in the Bible that provide the basis for systematic personal and family worship will be expounded. Several key biblical figures will also be considered providing examples of the consequences of success and failure in perpetuating the ways of God to their families.

While the current generation may never live to see a sweeping revival, which reverses the current international trends toward ungodliness, God brings encouragement in His Word to expect His principles to bring about real change and positively impact the culture. One can see great success with an intentional application of God's principles and also great failure when families and leaders refuse to apply these means of blessing future generations. Historically, one of the simplest methods of inculcating the teachings of God's Word has been regular times of family worship in which families read through passages of Scripture and fathers and mothers teach life principles based on the Bible to be applied to all of life. In addition to considering God's call in training up families in righteousness, this chapter will explore the historical application of this training in righteousness in the event of family worship. Chapter 3 will give more specific information on how families can confidently enter into meaningful times of life-changing family worship.

The spiritual and moral decline in the world is very serious, but it is not without hope. While the church has been a party to this decline, even now some have intensified their interest in faithful biblical family leadership and have begun to make a difference in their churches and communities.³ Those leaders most serious about taking God at His word and entering into the promises as well as the responsibilities of leadership appeal to a number of biblical passages addressed next.

³Ibid., 20.

Old Testament

God's Commands and Expectations

Genesis 1:28 records the overarching purpose statement God gave to His newly created man and woman: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” This command is fleshed out and expanded upon notably in Genesis 3:15 where God promises to raise up a seed to defeat evil. In Genesis 18 God provides more specific instructions to Abraham regarding his own family thus proving a model for the future. Deuteronomy 6 provides a greater explanation of God's direction for fathers in leading their families.⁴ Successes and failures can be seen along the way in the Bible's narratives. Joshua, Eli, Samuel, David, and Solomon will be considered in light of their adherence to God's principles.

Genesis 18:17-21 indicates that the overarching task Abraham must enter into as a means of fulfilling God's purposes in his life is to lead his family in the ways of the Lord. Scripture records that God did not set Abraham apart for mere purposeless material blessing, disconnected from the rest of his creation. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is to fix in the minds of God's people the consequences of inattentiveness to the things of God. Genesis 18:19 records God's words to Abraham: “For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.” The thrust of this verse is that God intends to use Abraham's faithfulness in perpetuating His ways to and through his family that He might bring them into the blessings He promised and use them as a blessing to

⁴James M. Hamilton, “That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord,” *Journal Of Family Ministry* 1, no. 1 (2010): 10-17.

the families of the earth. The passage is a very important summary statement of what God is doing with Abraham and his family. Abraham is to be the conduit through which salvation was to come to the people of the earth (Gen 12:3). How Abraham led his family and taught them the ways of God mattered for all eternity and was to impact every family of the earth that followed him. The focus is that Abraham is to take the initiative in leading his family, teaching them God's ways, showing them through his life lived before them and through his teaching that the things of God are of ultimate importance. There seems to be little difference between this command and the Fifth Commandment given later to Moses in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, which uses language that unmistakably indicates the remarkable importance of faithful parenting as a means of entering into God's promises.⁵

Nothing could make the urgency of Abraham fully entering into the task God set before him any clearer than what God discloses to him in the very next portion of Scripture: the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Keil and Delitzsch indicate that this destructive event was to "be a permanent memorial of the punitive righteousness of God, and to keep the fate of the ungodly constantly before the mind of Israel."⁶ The task set before Abraham was no small chore, but explained the singular purpose for his existence. If he needed reasons beyond being spoken to directly by God, surely God's clear description of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah would convince him of divine justice and what was at stake in his family leadership and discipleship. R. Kent Hughes summarizes the situation: "The eerie, burnt-out, sulphur-stenched remains of

⁵Kenneth O. Gangel and Stephen J. Bramer, *Genesis*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 164.

⁶C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, trans. James Martin, Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 230.

Sodom and Gomorrah permanently testified to what happens to a people who reject righteousness and justice.”⁷

Deuteronomy 6 further clarifies foundational aspects of carrying out this charge from God by identifying the home as the great center of learning and holiness. The camp of Israel was to be holy, and in order to accomplish this her homes had to be holy and saturated with the ways of God. This burden of leadership is placed primarily upon parents and leaders, recognizing that every gain made in the home, every godly character trait added, every event when faith was received and acted upon, was to impact the future and be magnified in the generations that follow.

The singular importance of creating and maintaining homes that are saturated with the presence of God is firmly established in Deuteronomy 6:1-9:

Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. 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. “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. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 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.

This charge follows Moses' recitation of the Law given by God earlier on Mount Horeb. In reminding Israel of God's Law, he also recounts the fearful circumstances as the mountain was burning with fire in a display of God's power. The children of Israel could not mistake the urgency and importance of the commands nor could they miss the

⁷R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 262.

fact that God intends for them to create a culture in their homes built around the ways of God.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 begins with commands and promises of long life coupled with teaching God's ways. Indeed the land was to be filled with the sounds of parents teaching their children God's law and the delightful obedience to this law as a result. God's holiness was to be ever-present in their minds to maintain their own holiness as they lived in the new land flowing with milk and honey. God's intention to bless and multiply them had as a means their obedience and delight in Him as their God. To make matters more difficult, Israel was also involved in the breathtaking demands of conquering the land given to them by God. They did not have the privilege of teaching their children the ways of God in undisturbed quiet and ease. This should give busy parents and leaders some comfort in that God recognizes the demands of life, but this realization does not nullify the necessity to reshape their priorities.

The full scope of the culture that they were to build in their homes is shown in Deuteronomy 6:7 where it seems that every waking moment is to be an occasion for teaching the ways of God. When God's people are in their homes, when they travel, as they lie down for rest, and when they rise for the day, they are to teach God's law. This teaching is with diligence and is marked with great care as stated in verse 3. Verses 8 and 9 complete the description of this new culture to be created in the homes as God's ways are to be so commonplace, familiar, and relevant that it is as if they were tied to their hands or frontlets for their eyes. Whatever they did, wherever they looked, there was the word of God. Moment by moment they were reminded of God's presence and care, and of their responsibility to be holy.

While individual families were to establish and maintain a culture in their homes saturated with the word of God, Deuteronomy 17:14-20 calls upon those who would serve as a future king to Israel:

Write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them. (Deut 17:18-19)

The kings of Israel were to be as a father to the people and in order to be faithful in their duties they were to write their own copy of the law and read it all the days of their lives.

The passage submits that the ability to learn the fear of God and to keep the law was bound up in the investment to read God's word daily. The context of the passage is concern over the future king slipping into the wicked practices of those invested with such power and authority. There are warnings against acquiring many horses and excessive amounts of silver and gold. Contained in the warning is an admonition against acquiring many wives, thus drawing his heart away from God and country. A routine investment in the word of God is the ordained method to combat sinful tendencies and temptations.

Examples from Narrative Passages

While the Genesis and Deuteronomy passages establish God's commands and expectations for families as they bring up the future of the nation, Judges 2:6-10 highlights the powerful impact one individual, Joshua, had as leader in his generation and also the distinct failure of the very next generation to declare and continue the ways of the Lord. The Judges passage gives narrative to how the commands for family leadership were carried out and the effectiveness of leadership. The text indicates that all the days of Joshua and those who served with him, Israel as a nation followed the Lord.

Joshua's military prowess and success are stressed in the biblical record. Behind these exploits is an unshakable loyalty to God marked by honor and integrity.⁸

Unfortunately, paganism was deeply entrenched in the people, hinted at in Joshua 24:14-15, where Joshua's parting words are a call to put away the false gods and follow the Lord.⁹ The opening pages of Judges confirm the grip this false religion had on Israel. Judges 2:10 says, "All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel." What an agonizing admission that these men utterly failed not merely in a certain aspect of the commission given to Abraham in Genesis 18 and repeated to Moses in Deuteronomy 6, but in the very essence of the charge given to them. The purpose in God's choosing Abraham in the first place was to perpetuate the ways of God, to be done primarily through the systematic teaching of God's ways to their families. It seems unthinkable that a generation of people who saw so much of the visible activity of God could fail to teach the ways of God to their children.

Apparently the priests experienced some failure mixed with success in their duties as teachers, and the elaborate system of rituals and memorials no longer held the interest of Israel in passing on the rich religious tradition. Doubtless some parents were more attentive in perpetuating the ways of God to their children than others and thus enjoyed more success.¹⁰ The sharp contrast between the faithfulness of Joshua's generation and the degradation of the following generation prepares the reader for the

⁸Arthur E. Cundall and Leon Morris, *Judges and Ruth*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1968), 69.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, The New American Commentary, vol. 6 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 122.

shameful history of the nation recorded in the rest of the book of Judges.¹¹

First Samuel 3:10-14 indicates God's intent to cut off the house of Eli and lays much of the blame at Eli's failure to discipline his son's. To "cut-off the house of Eli" meant that God would permanently remove Eli's descendants from the leadership of the nation. The very next chapter records their death as a result of battle with the Philistines and was prophesied as certain judgment for their deeds in 1 Samuel 2. The house of Eli had scorned the sacrifices and offerings (1 Sam 2:29) and this defiant sin would not be removed.¹²

While the passage in Judges 2:10 shows the massive impact of many failing to perpetuate the ways of God to future generations; the lives of Eli, Samuel, David, and Solomon show the immense force that a single family and a single man can have on society. These men were tremendously gifted by God and had signal successes in their devotion and work for God, yet their failures in successfully perpetuating the ways of God to their children, unfortunately had the far greater and lasting impact. One can only guess the extent of the negative impact Eli's sons had in their disdain for God. First Samuel 2:22-24 indicates that many knew of their wickedness. A typical church and her leaders would have a terrible reputation if the pastors were fornicating with the female helpers. In this situation the priest of God was allowing this to happen under his nose.

It is true that children are responsible for their own sins, yet Eli is shown to

¹¹C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel*, trans. James Martin, Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 268.

¹²David Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 180.

bear a great responsibility in the matter of his sons.¹³ First Samuel 3:13 records, “For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them.” First Samuel 2:23-25 indicates that Eli did speak to his sons concerning their wickedness but fell short in honoring God through it and quelling the sin. Perhaps the very least Eli could have done is to discipline his sons and remove them from leadership. He did not restrain their behavior, something he had the authority to do, and the things of God were profaned. Keil and Delitzsch call this “weakness and criminal indulgence toward his wicked sons.”¹⁴

Samuel seems to have suffered from the same malady. He too appointed his sons to positions of leadership in Israel, probably not completely unexpected by the people, for the very reason that it was expected he would raise his sons to honor God. Yet, they too failed. First Samuel 8:5 indicates that the primary reason Israel rejects God as king, and so demand an earthly king, is because of the wickedness of Samuel’s sons. The elders of Israel were concerned that their leader Samuel was aging and there appeared no one capable of taking his place. Perhaps his sons would have continued their debauchery after a strong fatherly rebuke and firm loving leadership, but indulgence was Samuel’s response instead, resulting ultimately in the rejection of God as their king.

Keil and Delitzsch agree with Calvin in that the sinfulness of the situation is not in the awareness of the elders of Israel in their future leadership and lack of prospects but in their apparent willingness to indoctrinate God’s people with the

¹³Keil and Delitzsch, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel*, 36.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 51.

leadership principles of the surrounding pagan nations.¹⁵ The elders seem unwilling to wait on God to provide another leader as he did in Samuel, one through whom He would lead the nation, unlike a king. The phrase “like all the nations” perfectly matches the cry of this present world of bowing to godless peer pressure. The Israelites grossly underestimated their request and seem to miss the horror of what they are asking: an exchange of their unique and very special status with God in order that they may be like the nations surrounding them. They, very simply, are lusting after the empty things of the world.¹⁶ Doubtless, a number of factors led Israel to this juncture of demanding a king, but it seems clear that the precipitating event involves Samuel’s leadership of his sons.

During King David’s reign, the sin of Absalom and David’s subsequent response of indulgence proved to be a powerful turning point and was due in part to his failure as a father. Absalom murdered his brother Amnon because Amnon raped their sister Tamar and then later led the hearts of the people away from David and attempted a coup. David was angry, as reported in 2 Samuel 13:21, but did nothing. He was already morally compromised due to the Bathsheba affair and was over indulgent of his children. The aftermath of the failed coup attempt confirms this acute fatherly weakness as Joab rebukes David after Absalom is killed. While surely it was not sinful for David to mourn his son’s death, his reaction led the brave warriors to feel shame for their defense of David and Israel instead of victory for putting down the sinful overthrow. David failed to discipline his sons, and Scripture traces this failure as being

¹⁵Ibid., 83.

¹⁶Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 248.

complicit in these troubles.¹⁷

Surely Solomon's heart being turned to other gods had an impact on the immediate demise of the nation of Israel after his death. John Bunyan places on the lips of Mr. Wet Eyes in his great book, *The Holy War*, "Good men have bad children."¹⁸ Although Judah remained under the lineage of David, the leadership of Israel was permanently removed from the house of David after Solomon's reign.

King Solomon was used mightily by God to pen the great wisdom books that address much of the future failure of the kingdom, failure that if avoided, surely would have assisted in the perpetuation of the kingdom. Yet, while he was used to write these books, it is likely that his days were unduly preoccupied with his 700 wives, 300 concubines, and over 180,000 slaves for his building projects as recorded in the book of 1 Kings. His own son, Rehoboam, rejected the wisdom of the elders and continued the slippery slope of ungodly leadership, severing the kingdom in two before his reign had really begun. The complications added to the life of a family with polygamy and a sense of entitlement natural to kings cannot be overstated. Samuel warned the Israelites of these things as they demanded a king in 1 Samuel 8:10-18, but his hard hitting charge fell on deaf ears. King Solomon's celebrity lifestyle seemed incompatible with that exhortation given to Abraham in Genesis 18:19 to "command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice" and the exhortation given by the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2:2 to "lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly, and dignified in every way."

The historical books of Judges and 1 Samuel record key successes and failures

¹⁷Keil and Delitzsch, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel*, 400.

¹⁸John Bunyan, *The Holy War* (Choteau, MT: Old Paths Gospel, n.d.), 132.

of passing on the faith. These accounts demonstrate the effectiveness of God's prescribed methods and the failure that must necessarily come when God's ways are rejected. Joshua evidently established a prevailing priority in his home and administration to teach, perpetuate, and exalt the ways of God and the result was a generation that largely followed God and submitted to his leadership. No doubt, God works through means, and much of the arsenal that God uses has to do with an ever-growing understanding and effectiveness from one generation to the next. When one generation becomes spiritually bankrupt, the generation that follows has to start with an empty account. They must work with what they receive, not what they would like to receive. In navigational terms, one has to begin travel from his present location, though he may desire a more preferable starting point.

The main point in looking at these particular Old Testament leaders is not to overemphasize their failures but to recognize that the sovereign God uses means to carry out His plans. What one does regarding God's commands and expectations is important for the present and the future. Acts of obedience to God and acts of disobedience to God will each have consequences that will be seen in those who follow. The sins of parents do impact their children. The advent of Christ did not sever personal holiness from the means to attain this holiness.

It is undeniable that God intended for Abraham to understand that his faithfulness in perpetuating the ways of God to his family was an important means to bring about God's promises, as recorded in Genesis 18. David's faithfulness in trusting God in fearless obedience while fighting the battles of Israel brought about much success for the nation but his indulgence and inattention in the lives of his children, who would someday be leaders in Israel, was also consequential. While children bear the responsibility for their own sins and must own the consequences of them, certain aspects

of their successes and failures are directly associated to the success their fathers and mothers had in perpetuating the things of God to them in their home. The single-most important expression of the perpetuation of the things of God in the home is family and personal worship.

The examples of Israel's great leaders also illustrate the difficulty sin presents regarding a leader's ability to teach the ways of God and lead well. When the course of events were going well for Israel and her leaders were not involved in debilitating sin, the people received leadership humbly and enjoyed the fruits of obedience. On the occasions of sin among the leaders, not only did the people suffer with judgment from God or from corrupt priests, they also did not receive leadership and teaching necessary for their continued survival as a godly nation. The history of the nation of Israel indicates that her leader's continual attention to the ways of God was necessary for the nation to continue. When the commitment to godliness waned the nation fell away from God.

Unchecked sin that is not addressed appropriately essentially becomes a new standard. Several dynamics are at play in these situations. One dynamic is that an unrepentant leader who involves himself in open, unconfessed sin makes a mockery of the law and leads others to follow his wicked ways. If the king is sinning in a certain way then the people sense they can do the same things. When the people are held accountable for the same wrongs the king commits freely, bitterness sets in and the relationship between the king and the people begins to break down. The cases of Eli, Samuel, David, and Solomon affirm this dynamic. The people of Israel recognized the sinfulness of the particular situations addressed previously, and in the cases where there was no real resolution, the relationship between the people and the leaders was badly damaged.

Another dynamic is that even in the case of a repentant leader, the mandate to lead and require obedience is damaged. Certain aspects of misplaced humility would lead a king to be indulgent of wrong doings because of his own failure. The biblical history of the monarchy in Israel summarized previously demonstrates this dynamic as well. The biblical requirement for pastors to have God honoring families is consistent with God's commands and anticipates the harm done in a church when leaders and families openly sin against God's clear commands and do not repent and recover. The requirement for church leaders to have God-following families also anticipates the reduced ability a pastor has to lead if he has compromised the work himself with sin or had sinful situations occur in his family. Even in a situation when prominent, life-dominating sin is confessed and repented of by a pastor, there is potential permanent disqualification from the office of pastor because of his inability to press upon his hearers the necessity of obedience and sanctification.

In the case of parents and children the same is true. When parents draw attention to the fact that the entire family is under the authority of God and that the prescribed response to sin is always repentance and receiving the forgiveness God offers, then a fresh start can be made. Parents who are transparent in their leadership and quick to ask forgiveness for wrongs are forging important family bonds. Children know their parents are not perfect in the first place and their admission and repentance can draw the entire family closer to God and each other instead of tearing the family apart. King David's ability to recover certain aspects of his honor as king were due in part to his repentant heart.

Wisdom Literature Which Addresses Aspects of Family Worship

Much can be gleaned from the wisdom literature, which could become very

useful content for the occasion of personal and family worship. Perhaps even more helpful for the present subject are truths found in Proverbs that describe the special relationship between parents and children. The book of Proverbs is primarily a series of thirty-one wisdom documents a father is conferring upon his son. The book covers a wide range of topics from housekeeping and finances to sexual temptation and appropriate expressions of kindness. The importance of trusting in God and the horror of rejecting God are encountered in this book as well as most other areas of concern in life. Proverbs truly underscores not only vitally important wisdom but how this wisdom is to be taught and received.

The teachings in Proverbs reveal many aspects of the unique relationship between parents and children. Proverbs 23:15-16 describes a family connection between father and son in which the son's faithfulness is a causative force in the joy of the father: "My son, if your heart is wise, my heart too will be glad. My inmost being will exult when your lips speak what is right." Post-modernity's hostility against families has served to suppress this unbreakable connection and has become a type of opiate to provide false comfort to parents who suffer largely because they have made little investment in their greatest source of earthly joy—the spiritual faithfulness of their children. Proverbs 23 goes on to record,

Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding. The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice. (Prov 23:22-25)

Nothing can rival such an appeal to the conscience of a child. The one whom God used to bring about physical life petitions for the child to recognize the importance of following God, not only for his own soul's safety, but for the possibility of joy in the earthly life of the parents and child. The wisdom of God is shown to be premium in life, something to be gathered and retained at all costs. Further, this wisdom, whose source is

God, is disseminated from the lips of the father and mother. God takes full advantage of his design of giving children the inclination to listen to and trust parents. Parents must steward this special relationship with the constant recognition of the delicacy of the bond. The connection between parents of children is fertilized with tenderness and promises kept. The Proverbs represent a continual persuasion by parents to listen to God and follow him. These pleas come largely in the form of warnings for disobedience and promises for joy on the occasion of obedience.

There is a significant challenge in recognizing the importance of raising godly children and not making them the first priority in the home. Proverbs 17:6 affirms that the great source of joy in families is not only children but grandchildren: “Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers.” However, for these children to become a source of joy and not grief, the first priority in a home must be the ways of God and God himself, not children. Proverbs 19:18 records, “Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.” A key aspect of this admonition is timeliness in applying discipline and establishing godly habits. The greatest hope and the most thorough impact in training is training which begins early. Creating an environment in homes that includes normal, daily worship events allows the centerpiece of the home to be God. There will be talk of God in the home regularly, the words of God will be discussed, and the ways of God will be implemented with such an ordinariness that habits will be formed.

Proverbs 22:6 confirms this idea: “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Children are typically most receptive to receive training from parents when they are young and the earlier good habits can be better formed. With this important means of leading children in the ways of God, parents and leaders have every reason to expect that God will bless his appointed means with

gospel success.

The admonishment for children to sit at the feet of their parents as teachers and to consider the life lessons as urgently important presumes that parents have something to say and have a good working knowledge of the Bible and its application:

Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching. When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth." (Prov 4:1-5)

The time when mothers and fathers need to be so involved in raising children is also the time when parents may be most drawn to career moves and the development of other interests. The conveniences of modernity have somehow purchased no extra time for families to focus on training in godliness. The demanding task of preparing children for the future requires that parents be continually growing in grace themselves. Thankfully God has promised courage and strength. Parents must be ready to speak God's words on many subjects of need in their home and also not be ashamed to say, "I will have to study that more."

The majority of Proverbs is a record of a father training his son, but the last chapter speaks of wisdom from the mother's perspective. Such insightful training on the qualities of a future wife and priorities in life must be addressed by a faithful mother for a full-orbed perspective. The point of view of a woman whose husband was king and whose son will be king should be expected to provide important insight. Her warnings about common blind spots and misplaced priorities are essential for good leaders. She had doubtlessly witnessed the drunken royal parties and the temporary vulnerability of leaders when incapacitated with alcohol and loose women. Her directions to remember the poor and needy underscore urgently important topics that may tend to be overlooked

by a leader expecting to enjoy the privileges of royalty out of sight of the lower classes or preoccupied with warring nations.

Poetic Literature Associated with Family Worship

It would be difficult to overstate the didactic quality of the Bible's poetic literature. Psalm 119 alone should convince anyone of the importance of the Bible in every aspect of a person's life. Psalms 32 and 51 provide key material in understanding the proper response to the sin of David recorded in the historic literature. The Psalms address the daily grind of life and all of the ups and downs included even in the most dynamic of lives.

One particular passage addresses the very basis and foundation of family worship:

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. 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. 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, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and 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. (Pss 78:2-8).

Once again, the viability of the nation of Israel is based upon the ability of one generation to pass on the ways of God to the next. The word of God must be declared to the next generation and it must also be received. Psalm 78 indicates the content of family and personal worship: all God has done and those things he has commanded. The way one remembers the works of God and the ways of God is primarily in the daily routine of worshiping him in the home. With ingenuity and intentionality, leaders must winsomely present the word of God and expect that he will keep his promise to use their efforts to perpetuate his kingdom.

Psalm 78 affirms Deuteronomy 6 and is in complete agreement with the methodology already laid down in Genesis 18 directed to Abraham. This passage also includes a warning taken from the history of Israel. There is no reason to expect that the blessings of obedience will be enjoyed without the accompanying obedience.

The Old Testament has many commands and expectations for families and provides much information on how parents and children are to interact. Through the history, narratives, wisdom literature, and poetry much can be gleaned about God's intentions for families and the great joy that can result from entering into God purposes.

New Testament

The New Testament does not lighten the demand made upon family leaders but likens marriage to the relationship Christ has with the church and the relationship between fathers and children to the relationship of the heavenly Father to the elect. Ephesians 5:22-33 and 6:1-4 establish the husband's responsibility to assist the wife in making spiritual progress and the father's responsibility to raise his children in an environment conducive to the things of God and to teach them the things of God. The pastoral epistles give further instruction on key principles to be handed down from one generation to the next; aspects in which the faithful pastor will be a gentle reminder and teacher.

The wisdom of Proverbs catalogs the unique relationship between parents and children that is carried on in the New Testament. Third John 1:4 affirms the irrepressible impact children have on parents: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." Doubtless the children he was referring to were primarily those he was used to bring to new life in Christ, yet the application rings true for biological families as well. The apostle Paul captures the connection between the faithfulness of children and the lasting joy of parents in 1 Thessalonians:

For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy. (1 Thess 2:19-20)

For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you—for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord. For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? (1 Thess 3:5-10)

Once again the initial application is to those in which he was used by God to bring to the faith, yet he speaks in familial terms that can be affirmed by every parent. The negative impact children who rebel against God have on their parents seems to touch every aspect of life and suppress joy over an entire lifetime. Paul describes faithful children as being the very centerpiece of joy and powerful motivation to carry on the hard work of investing in their spiritual lives in the face of difficulty. The severe stress and complexity that characterized Paul's life seemed to be neutralized by the comfort he received when considering the faithfulness of his children in the faith.

Commands Regarding Family Leadership

The instruction gained in family worship is often thought of as being directed solely at children, yet adults in the family must not be overlooked in the leader's preparation to teach. The apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians contains the Bible's most comprehensive statement on the roles of men and women in marriage. Within this passage wives are directed to be submissive to their husbands as they would submit to the Lord. The essence of the wife's response to her husband is respectful love. The passage contains far more instruction to husbands than to wives, which should be expected since the husbands carry the greater responsibility in the marriage. Paul directs husbands to

sacrificial, loving leadership and holds them responsible to assist their wives in making spiritual progress.¹⁹

The concept of headship seeps through this passage as Christ is affirmed as the head of the church and the husband is affirmed as the head of the wife. The wife's obedience becomes a matter of devotion and the husband's authority an expression of love.²⁰ The comparison of Christ's love for the church and a husband's love for his wife becomes intermingled in this passage confirming the thoroughness of the model. By setting this highest of standards as the level of treatment for husbands toward their wives, the apostle Paul safeguards the wife's dignity and welfare.²¹

It is in keeping with other biblical concepts of the husband's headship over the wife that he would also bear some responsibility in her sanctification to better prepare her for heaven and her eternal union with Christ. The work of sanctification referred to in this passage is an action of Christ toward the church.²² In the home, the lion's share of this leadership involving formal teaching along the path of sanctification must necessarily occur in the context of family worship. Wilson sees the admonition for husbands to invest in the spiritual growth of their wives not as a moral obligation but as "spiritual indebtedness."²³ Jay Adams affirms that the Bible's teaches that Christ's authority in the

¹⁹William Hendriksen, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 255.

²⁰Geoffrey B. Wilson, *Ephesians* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1986), 116.

²¹*Ibid.*, 117.

²²*Ibid.*, 118.

²³*Ibid.*

home is centered on the husband.²⁴ The husband is to lead the wife in a use of her God-given gifts to the glory of Christ.²⁵ One key friction point with the husband's leadership is that he must be spiritually mature and have biblical knowledge and spiritual depth in some ways beyond his wife if he is to be truly value-added in assisting her in spiritual growth. He will have trouble taking her to spiritual depths he has not been himself, so husbands must be constant students of God's word.

Husbands are not only exhorted to love their wives but shown the natural inclination to do so: "for no one ever hated his own flesh" (Eph 5:29 ESV). The Bible is not commending blind self-love but simply alluding to the most likely response individuals have toward their own person.²⁶ Normal people are naturally inclined toward self-preservation and this preservation in a marriage includes particular care for husband or wife. Married couples would do well to cultivate a relationship that is increasingly characterized by oneness, therefore cultivating this environment of loving care for each other. Here the apostle brings together the description of marital oneness first noted in Genesis 2:24 and love for neighbor first commanded in Leviticus 19:18.²⁷

Wives are not only on the receiving end of family worship: one would be foolish to overlook the incredible impact wives and mothers have on future generations. Writing to Timothy, Paul speaks of the faith of his mother and grandmother expecting

²⁴Jay Adams, *Christian Living in the Home* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972), 88.

²⁵Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2009), 295.

²⁶Wilson, *Ephesians*, 120.

²⁷F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 391.

the same to dwell in him: “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). God had given the means of a faithful mother and grandmother to build a multi-generational legacy that had a huge impact on the kingdom of God.

The instructions given to Titus regarding sound doctrine taught to women had to do with them fully entering into the work of home and family with purity and self-control:

Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. (Titus 2:3-5)

The demands of any home may lead the best of women to jettison kindness and give into fearful inactivity. This letter reminds wives and mothers how their attitude will flavor the home and states that the alternative to joyfully entering into the task of homemaking is that of bringing dishonor upon the word of God.

The commission given to Adam and Eve and to their posterity in Genesis 1:28 to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” required great effort from both of them and so requires great labor in those who follow. Adam was given a helpmeet, not as an added worker for the occasional tough times, but because every aspect of God’s assignment to them would require each of their unique qualities.

Paul gives direction to the couple concerning their roles as parents in the next section of Ephesians. He has given a firm foundation in a biblical marriage grounded in a growing relationship with the heavenly Father in each of the parents.²⁸ Christian parenting must occur in the context of a faithful church where parents gain much

²⁸Chapell, *Ephesians*, 308.

practical assistance through the preaching of the Word, the example of elders, or other fellowship with their peers.²⁹ The Bible offers no variants from this model.

Paul's thought continues on specifically addressing fathers, and in verse 4 he says, "Fathers do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Referring to R. C. Trench's work on the New Testament, Geoffrey Wilson indicates that the word translated "discipline" relates to "training by act which refers to the laws and ordinances of the Christian household, the transgression of which will induce correction" and "instruction" relates to "training by the word of encouragement when this is sufficient, but also by that of reproof when that is required."³⁰ Faithful leaders understand the tension between the requirement to train in godliness and hold accountable on the one hand and not embittering charges on the other. Unfortunately many have attempted to not embitter children by not holding them accountable to God's standard. God has clearly not crowned this approach with success.

John MacArthur indicates that "high divorce rates, extramarital affairs, and shattered families seemed to be the norm in the first-century Roman world."³¹ In first century Rome a law existed, called *patria potestas* which meant, "the father's power."³² This law gave the father complete power over the members of the family, he could sell them as slaves, have them work the fields in chains, or even punish them to the point of

²⁹Ibid., 306.

³⁰Wilson, *Ephesians*, 125.

³¹John MacArthur, *The Family* (Chicago: Moody, 1982), 98.

³²Ibid.

death.³³ Seneca, one of the great leaders of the Roman empire, said, “We slaughter a fierce ox, we strangle a mad dog, we plunge a knife into a sick cow, and children who are born weakly and deformed we drown!” Children thrown out by their parents would often be taken to the forum, where the boys would typically be raised as slaves and the girls would become prostitutes.³⁴

The apostle’s teaching was radical for the day and confirmed that if children were to mature into faithfulness and break the chain of chaos the parents must selflessly invest in their lives. The Bible calls for active, intentional involvement on the part of the parents to lovingly lead and teach their children. Doubtless, much of what children learn is in the day to day routines in the home, but there must be purposeful, formal training from the Bible on a regular basis, if, by the grace of God, the children are to grow up into great blessings in the kingdom of God and tools to be reckoned with against the evil forces of the world. MacArthur affirms that the all-consuming goal of parents should be to build a godly, Christ-honoring home.³⁵

Peter O’Brien describes the father’s task to be “gentle, patient educators of their children.”³⁶ He affirms that the point of the passage is that the husband and father is to care for his wife and family as the heavenly Father cares for them. Regarding the training of children, he points to the verb ‘nourish,’ previously used in 5:29 relating to

³³Ibid., 99.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., 128.

³⁶Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 447.

Christ nourishing the church, and indicates this is to be an education with Christian distinctives.³⁷

Commands Regarding Growing in Grace

Second Peter 1:3-10 indicates that the responsibility and the inclination of the redeemed will be to continually grow in the knowledge of God. While many Christians see their spiritual growth as a series of crises, Peter describes it accurately as a process of taking on the divine nature through adoption and escaping worldly corruption.³⁸

Normalcy in the Christian life is established as increasing in those virtues characterized by Christ:

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. (2 Pet 1:3-10)

Several important contrasts are made in this passage. One contrast is verse 4, where partaking of the divine nature is set alongside being corrupt.³⁹ Believers are to abound in holiness not sinfulness. Another contrast in verse 8 sets productivity

³⁷Ibid., 446.

³⁸Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 184.

³⁹Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 196.

alongside idleness.⁴⁰ Here is the admonition to hard work and be productive. God is interested in believers being active, useful members of his kingdom, and in order to comply, they are to be growing in Christian virtue. Peter is not slipping into works righteousness but is informing readers that growth in Christ is not like a burst satellite transmission but more like the steady growth in knowledge experienced when a long-term investment is made toward that end.⁴¹ Because of God's bounteous care, the believer is to "bring all energy to bear" in this process of adding one virtue upon another for the benefit of the kingdom.⁴² Many are unprepared for the hard work of growing in godliness and may expect that if spiritual growth becomes hard then it is not from God or they may not recognize that the necessity to grow and prepare themselves spiritually is a matter of great importance to the kingdom of God and their own posterity. Attentiveness to growing in grace is a means to an end. The redeemed are bound for heaven, but are informed that what they do is important and will impact the lives of those around them.

Some leaders may also be guilty of soothing the consciences of parents experiencing difficulties in their children, which are clearly the result of a failure to make the ways of God a priority in their homes. Even the best of parents experience children who turn away from God for a lifetime, however, it seems that because of the fear of offending anyone, some pastors fail to appropriately hold parents accountable in things they can do and that they are called to do in the Bible. Perhaps part of the reason

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 296.

⁴²Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 188.

for this is that it has become proverbial in the Christian church that the pastor's children are difficult and disobedient as a result of this same lack of consideration in obeying God's commands to parents. The question might be asked from the congregation, "If you cannot lead your own children, why should I trust you with mine?" Thankfully God can overcome these difficult obstacles, and there is no excuse to be unmerciful in calling each other to greater levels of faithfulness and joy in this area of family and personal worship.

The eight virtues Peter addresses are not intended to be exhaustive, but they do establish an excellent basis upon which to focus attention in family worship. They can also become a sort of structural support as different aspects of life and the Bible are addressed at home. For instance, when the narrative of Cain and Abel is discussed, the topic of bullying may be addressed. The question may be discussed; "What does faith have to do with my response to bullying or moral excellence?"

The first virtue is faith. This is personal trust in God, not an unexpected beginning point.⁴³ The theme of faith, particularly as the beginning point of the entire Christian life and the conduit through which one enjoys the benefits of redemption, will necessarily be a very common topic in family and personal worship. Saving faith is mimicked by false faith and is a topic that would be very helpful to discuss. One example of this would be the faith that has no accompanying works as discussed in the book of James. Many struggle with assurance and need to hear about the qualities of true, saving faith thus allowing them to enjoy the benefits assurance brings. As mentioned previously, the home is the place to discuss how one comes to Christ and what to expect when one senses God working in their life. The quality of permanence in

⁴³Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 299.

saving faith provides great promise to those who wonder if God has left them after a time of testing or a sinful decision.

The second virtue is goodness or moral excellence and God supplies this through his effective call.⁴⁴ The Christian life is that which springs from the real, new birth and has concrete effects in individuals, particularly in the area of delighting in biblical morality. More and more believers should be inclined to choose the right thing to do without having to think much about it as they mature in Christ. The quality of moral excellence in believers presents a great way to stand out in an immoral world or even in a culture that claims issues of morality are no longer relevant. Much of society is moving away from being conscious of God in everyday affairs and thus old concerns about what is right in the eyes of God have been marginalized and are no longer considered important. Impressing upon a new generation the continual presence of God and the importance of making morally upright decisions will be an important part of any home worship routine. As the Bible is read and discussed, the holy character of God is revealed and spiritual change can be made in individuals. Taking moral excellence into account can also be an exceptional method to assist in decision-making since one's desires are often tainted by immoral ideas that would disqualify them as legitimate biblical courses of action for the future.

The third virtue is knowledge of God's will and ways and added to this is the fourth, self-control. The ability to restrain oneself is also listed as a fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23. The discipline involved in being a diligent lifelong student of God's Word and way is commended here. As the new birth provides fresh desire to know God, self-control along with steadfastness provides the ability to stay on this task for a

⁴⁴Ibid.

lifetime and see the real benefits to God's kingdom and those he has placed in one's sphere of influence. Self-control is often seen only in its negative light: the ability to restrain oneself from sinning. Yet much self-control is needed in following God and doing the right thing when others fall into sin. The apostle Paul encourages Timothy to prepare himself for the stark reality of those with temporary faith departing from the church. Self-control is at a premium when fearful difficulties come. When David sinned in the case of Bathsheba, recorded in 2 Samuel 11, self-control was needed. Had he been thinking of the truths of God, the terrible consequences of disobedience, and the impact upon the kingdom, he would have acted in a different manner. On the other hand, when David pushed through his fear and with boldness and courage defeated the enemies of God in battle, he displayed great measures of self-control. This of course is one reason the narratives of David are so important, because they present one who loved God imperfectly, just as every believer does. To stay on God's course requires self-control and this should be taught in worship times. One's ability to hold fast to God's ways in the midst of temptation to sin or run away in fear is predicated on their knowledge of God's ways revealed in his word.

The fifth virtue is endurance or steadfastness. The ability to persevere in faithfulness is particularly important in difficult times.⁴⁵ Many would far rather run in a sprint race than in a marathon because the pain and difficulty come to an end much quicker. Life in Christ is much more like a marathon requiring endurance and the ability to deal with pain and difficulty while running the race. Sprinters can put off nagging pain until the race is over, marathon runners must learn to run with pain for a long time if need be. The scriptural exhortations to be steadfast seem innumerable and

⁴⁵Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 300.

should persuade any Christian that following God for a lifetime is not easy.

Steadfastness is a vital virtue in a culture that cries out, “If anything is hard then it is not worth doing.”

Readers are also exhorted to godliness. Schreiner indicates that godliness is piety or “living a life that is like God.”⁴⁶ In 2 Peter 1:3, one reads that God supplies everything needed “for life and godliness,” yet believers must energetically establish this as a primary goal. The last two virtues focus on love, a true distinction in the Christian community, and something that false teachers, which Peter was opposing, did not possess. The love for families, friends, the church, and the lost should drive believers to be more sober about the need to teach and model the ways of God to others as a true means of gospel propagation and sanctification. Perhaps one of the most difficult qualities to teach and model is genuine love. This quality may reveal itself more in the way one prays or the priority given to helping others selflessly. The way leaders talk about those in need of Christ or in need of daily food and shelter will be an indication of how they are doing in this area of love for others.

Each of the virtues noted in this section of 2 Peter can act as an overlay to every activity for the Christian. The last virtue of love is shown to be the key to them all. First Corinthians 13 provides the stunning news that much can be done without love, in the name of Christ, but that it will have no profit. The qualities of love given in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 must constrain all that is done in family worship. To be instrumental in leading those under one’s charge to become more kind, patient, and selfless would be great success. To reduce the occasions of being irritable in this angry culture and to be less boastful when others are flaunting their accolades would be grand marks of growth

⁴⁶Ibid.

as well. The ability to model and teach love for others persuasively would also be a wonderful mark of success in relationships between parent and child either biological or spiritual or both.

These sections of Scripture establish timeless principles and provide reliable instructions for individuals and families to enter into God's great blessings of involvement in much gospel usefulness and joy in Christ. For reasons known only to God, he has entrusted the propagation of urgently important truths and the gospel itself, to humanity. In all her sinfulness and frailty, humankind has been entrusted with the incredibly vulnerable task of bringing the Word of God to their own generation and those that follow.

Much can go wrong in this process. One problem is that those who should transmit these precious truths to others have misunderstood key aspects and implications of God's instructions. For instance, Eli and his sons underestimated the wickedness of profaning the sacrifices of God and following their own rules regarding their portion of the people's offering to God (1 Sam 2:29-30). Another problem is life-dominating sin that can nullify any real kingdom progress in the lives of individuals, families, and nations. King Solomon received incredible gifts and abilities from God, yet he became so saturated in his lust of all that his breathtaking wealth could buy, that he ultimately missed the great purpose for which he was exalted to his high position in the first place. Solomon's wives turned his heart away from God which doubtlessly reduced the godly impact he was to have in the great task of inculcating the Word and ways of God to his children and those under his charge. Solomon's actions also brought the earthly kingdom of Israel to a shame-filled position somewhere between the love for the true God and submission to the false gods of the nations. First Kings 11:9

indicates that God was angry with Solomon “because his heart had turned away from the Lord.”

The following generations can also fumble in their reception of God’s ways. The generation that followed the great leader Joshua evidently frittered away the immense advantage that God had given them largely through the blood, sweat, and tears of those who had gone before. Like spoiled children of rich parents, those that followed Joshua somehow managed to completely walk away from the magnificent ways of God and forgot all of his benefits. They did what was right in their own eyes and proved to be largely devoid of godliness to their peril (Jdg 2:11-13).

Another problem is the reluctance to engage fully in the great tasks given by God with all diligence and energy. Every ounce of strength must be used to shoulder this load, but it seems that sinful inclinations to be as lazy as one can be often prevail. When one reads of the exploits of the early leaders of the church or of pioneer missionaries, the thought may come to mind, “I didn’t think it would be so hard to transmit the gospel.” But it is hard. The gospel business is the most demanding work on earth and thus requires the most demanding of preparation and care. Hazarding this preparation for ease and safety will not do.

In addition, the teachers and learners of God’s truths will never, this side of heaven, have the benefit of soaking up the ways of God in a perfectly holy environment. Who would not like to study God’s Word and take it to the nations in pristine circumstances without any adversaries? Negative peer pressure, unredeemed flesh, and the lusts of worldliness are just a few conditions under which gospel labors must prevail. The children of Israel were to live and perpetuate the ways of God in an environment militantly hostile to the true God and his people. Even with measured success in removing wicked nations from the land, ungodliness outside and sinfulness within the

camp ate away at much that was gained.

Although the task given by God and the difficulties attending it are daunting, great gains have been made by the faithful, empowered by God. Success has been promised by God. The way ahead is the same as it has always been, proven by the previous passages from God's Word. Genesis 18 defines man's great, unchanging task on earth: glorify God by obeying his commands to be a blessing to the nations by perpetuating his ways. This task takes on many forms and must be applied to many situations, yet it is the singular task of mankind.

The passages in Ephesians and 2 Peter further define methods for householders and leaders in the task of propagating God's ways and exhort readers to be fully engaged and put hands to the plow with a view of delightful success and hope for the future.

Conclusion

R. L. Dabney contends that the spark parents ignite with God in the lives of their children is one that can never be put out. He sheds light on the glorious privilege of parents as they have the ability to "multiply immortalities in ever widening progressive numbers."⁴⁷ No other creature has this opportunity nor this responsibility. Without consent, parents bring their children into "eternal, responsible existence."⁴⁸ Further, parents are responsible for conferring upon their children the "taint of original sin and guilt."⁴⁹ The responsibility of parents cannot be overstated, yet it seems the cry "who is

⁴⁷R. L. Dabney, *Theological and Evangelical*, vol. 1, Discussions (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1982), 679.

⁴⁸Ibid., 680.

⁴⁹Ibid.

able for this task?” is only seldom met with humble and simple submission to the benevolent Creator’s instructions. Even Christian parents fall into habits of feeling they have fulfilled their responsibility by dropping their children off at church, yet they cannot shake off the demands God places upon them as parents.

For the family leader the biblical implication is that God has designed a lifetime of gospel laboring and teaching the family little by little the ways of God. Again, the primary place for formal Bible teaching and daily worship is in the home. This places a tremendous responsibility on the family leader. The acute and very painful failure of husbands and fathers in the role of family worship and instruction is illustrated in the families of Joshua’s generation (Judg 2:10), Eli (1 Sam 2, 3), Samuel (1 Sam 8), David (1 Kgs 1), and Solomon (1 Kgs 11). John Calvin holds that the biblical admonition for family leaders is nothing less than an urgent call to the importance of propagating the word of God to those generations who follow: “The gross ignorance which reigns in the world, is the just punishment of men’s idleness.”⁵⁰

⁵⁰John Calvin, *Genesis, Calvin’s Commentaries*, trans. John King (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 481.

CHAPTER 3
THE THEORETICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL ISSUES
FOR TEACHING AND IMPROVING
FAMILY WORSHIP

The promises of God associated with raising children in God's ways and in growing in grace are very encouraging. The possibility of having a growing personal relationship with the Creator and becoming more holy like the Savior Jesus Christ should be exciting to the redeemed. Yet when one thinks about the means God has provided for this growth and the need for Christ in conversion to begin the work, one may falter under the potential difficulty and commitment required. It is a great thrill for any believer to look back into his past and perceive real spiritual growth in himself and those under his charge. This sort of spiritual power has been tremendously used of God to literally change the course of nations.

The steps on the path to growth are hard fought because one must contend with everything from unredeemed flesh and the sinfulness of the world, to the wiles of the devil and his minions. Revivals have swept through nations on occasion bringing new life and fresh urgency for the things of God, but the more common situation is that of spiritual decline. Christians rejoice in those former "glory days" but must press on to address the present.

When thoughtful Christians lament the ills of society, that lament has historically been directed at failure in the area of family worship. When families do not take the things of God seriously and walk along the paths of righteousness, the consequences are devastating. Jerry Marcellino's booklet on family worship documents

that this failure bears a significant portion of responsibility for great social and spiritual ills, while faithfulness in this area has been used of God mightily.

Historical Concerns

In 1679, the Synod of New England gathered in Boston in response to a request by the Massachusetts Colony General Court to answer the following question: What are the evils that have provoked the Lord to bring judgments upon New England? The church leaders gave fourteen answers to the question, the sixth being,

There are many families that do not pray to God constantly, morning and evening, and many more where Scriptures are not daily read so that the Word of Christ might dwell richly in them. . . . Most of the evils that abound among us proceed from the defects of family worship.¹

Isaac Backus wrote a century later in 1766,

New England has formerly been a place famous for religion in general and for family worship in particular. But of late, the neglect of this, as well as of other religious duties, has evidently been growing among us; which has caused much grief to pious souls.²

J. W. Alexander's statement in 1847 laments the same concern with something that was shocking in his day and is likely commonplace today: "There are some ruling elders and deacons who maintain no stated daily service of God in their homes."³

B. M. Palmer and J. W. Alexander present a biblically high view of the family and contend that for any nation to flourish, families must strive and succeed in providing biblical foundations.⁴This same concern is being voiced and written about today,

¹Jerry Marcellino, *Rediscovering the Lost Treasure of Family Worship* (Laurel, MS: Audubon, 1996), 2.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 3.

⁴B. M. Palmer and J. W. Alexander, *The Family* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1991), 13.

referred to next. These faithful men recognized what was born out in the historical narratives of the Bible. When the individual families of God slack off in their intentional, robust, and systematic worship of God in their homes the foundation of society crumbles underfoot.

Sociological Concerns

William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*, documents that one of the primary reasons the Pilgrims left Europe was concern over the flood of evil influences and the negative impact on their children.⁵ They recognized that their ability to carry out the charge God had given them to raise up godly seed was exceedingly difficult in their circumstances leading up to finally gaining a charter for a colony in the new world. The Pilgrims were watching their posterity being swept away by worldliness and the negative influences of the day. These Christians found that even with an urgent desire to pour into their children the things of God, their ability to counter and reverse the wretched influences of the surroundings was evaporating and they were losing ground.

A few hundred years later, shortly after the American Civil War, the cry for compulsory education provided by the government introduced yet another very serious concern. While the prospect of providing public education to the children of America has a number of beneficial consequences, there were and continue to be reasons to be gravely concerned. R. L. Dabney argued that the state has the power to take the leading role in educating children and that if allowed this role, the attempt to secularize education must necessarily lead to an attempt to make "godless" students.⁶ History has of course

⁵William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (San Antonio: Vision, 1999), 27.

⁶R. L. Dabney, *Secular*, Discussions (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1982), 4: 240.

confirmed Dabney's concern. The current state of public education in America has alarmed many families and brought to the forefront the necessity to be more intentional in leading them in the ways of God. While no society has had a prolonged opportunity to train their young in an environment wholly given to the ways of God, there has been a renewed recognition of the intensity and pervasiveness of the evil that must be countered within this training.

Educational leader Neil Postman argues that the underlying philosophy of the American government's educational system has to do with economic utility and consumerism. He finds this system to be seriously flawed.⁷ God's charge to his people in Deuteronomy 6 and his specific charge to Abraham in Genesis 18, mentioned in chapter 2 of this work, are incompatible with an end state of economic utility and consumerism. The current public educational environment including classroom practices, curriculums, and goals must in many ways be worked against in the cultures created in godly homes.

The historical record regarding the robust practice of biblical faith in the world confirms the trajectory hinted at in John 1, namely that it will be the minority of people that follow Christ. While it should be no surprise that culture is apathetic or even hostile to the gospel and its application, perhaps most alarming is the way professed Christians have jettisoned intentional Bible training that is counter to the worldliness around them. Due in part to the worldly strain in modern evangelicalism, when the default stance of Christians should be that of opposition to the world's system, most have instead attempted to exploit new technologies and media opportunities. The result has been that scores of well-meaning Christians have

⁷Neil Postman, *The End of Education* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 32.

confused internet popularity with approval from God. When the world becomes more attracted to the gospel it seems that either a revival is beginning or the professed gospel is becoming tainted with worldliness. Unfortunately, the latter is what is largely taking place.

In *Family Driven Faith*, Voddie Baucham cites that between 70 and 88 percent of Christian teens are leaving the church by their second year of college. When one couples this shocking rate of departure with what George Barna has discovered is now passing as being born again, the spiritual state of affairs seems clearer. The vast majority of those who claim to be born again do not believe in absolute truth and they believe Jesus sinned in his earthly life. Unfortunately, the belief system of those claiming to be Christians does not indicate true redemption.⁸ No person, saved or unsaved, has a perfect understanding of theology, but the apostle John's comment in 1 John 2:19 seems to apply in this case: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us." Those who are leaving have most likely not been redeemed.

Baucham goes on to cite Thom Rainer's research among Southern Baptists that indicates, "Nearly one-half of all church members may not be Christians."⁹ The upside to this breath-taking statistic is that it confirms the nature of saving faith has not changed. In other words, many are leaving the church but it is not because their faith has failed and God has not kept his promises, it is because they were never saved. Perhaps some spiritual work was done while at church but it was not saving work,

⁸Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 10.

⁹*Ibid.*, 12.

though they may have been convinced it was. Since it was not saving work there are no lasting effects.

The writing of David Wells that addresses the state of evangelicalism in America brings additional clarity to why the church has walked away from such an important means of grace in family worship. A significant aspect of contemporary evangelicalism is that in large measure it has “set itself against its past.”¹⁰ Many followers and shapers of modern evangelicalism have freed themselves from the old paths of truth and replaced them with updated versions that cannot carry on the practice of biblical Christianity. The simplicity of reading and discussing a passage of Scripture, singing a faithful hymn, and praying has been eclipsed by other attention grabbing activities that cannot work godliness into families at a pace to keep up with the surrounding worldliness.

The writer of Hebrews brings to light another issue that has had a stagnating effect in the diligence applied to combating the forces of evil and toiling in holiness:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. (Heb 12:1-4)

An undue emphasis on the idea of “letting go and letting God” has found fertile ground in the modern tendency among young people in particular to avoid hard work.¹¹ There is also confusion about how much God has promised to do and how much individuals are

¹⁰David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 294.

¹¹Alex Harris and Brett Harris, *Do Hard Things* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2008), 33.

expected to contribute in the process of sanctification.¹² The countless exhortations to holiness and commendations of hard work in the Bible, similar to the previous passage in Hebrews, gives credence to the idea that growing in Christ and increasing in usefulness in kingdom work is demanding. Some may also have the idea that applying too much effort to holiness indicates a lack of trust in God or a need for more patience in waiting on God to bring new strength. The historical, orthodox understanding points one in the direction of the necessity of hard work. Memorizing Scripture, thinking through the theological implications of decisions, and making time for learning and teaching all involve carving out and prioritizing hours in a week. There is no pill that one can take or easy road to travel that will give an individual quicker results than the day after day investment of taking in and applying the word of God.

The destructive surroundings and practices in society coupled with every individual's propensity toward evil must add urgency to the task of growing in holiness. It is difficult enough to bring God's Word to bear day after day in a household in order to teach the ways of God, but to do it in an environment hostile to the Gospel adds a new dimension to the task. Those faithful saints who have succeeded did not fall short of planning, strategizing, and diligently carrying out the great work of training up themselves and their posterity in God's ways. Through the years, a number of common themes have been set forward as methodologies and recommended subject matter.

Historical Recommendations

The classic parenting manual from the Dutch Second Reformation, *The Duties of Parents*, has a quote from Johan de Swaf in the introduction which states plainly the

¹²Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1996), 51

importance of the task of family worship and discipleship. He writes that children must be brought up in the ways of God “for God’s honor, the common good of the Republic, the well-being of the church of the Lord Christ, and the salvation of the children.”¹³ It seems undeniable that the task of leading children correctly is one of great urgency and importance, with failure unfortunately common and devastating, not only to the individual family but spreading its curse to the nation and world.

Koelman emphasizes several key areas of training among the duties of parents in the preparation of their children: God’s decrees of election and reprobation, prayer, the ability to determine good from evil, the catechism and the ten commandments, the great biblical narratives, church history, scripture memory, Psalm singing, morning and evening devotions, the lost state of their soul with Christ, and how to glorify God.¹⁴

Matthew Henry makes an excellent case for considering one’s house a little church. Henry is not one to despise the formal, congregational worship of God or the pastoral authority of those called of God to lead. He is not calling for an abandonment of “organized religion” or the establishment of formally constituted “house churches.” What he is referring to is the family leadership and discipleship that must take place with intentionality and purpose in the Christian household.¹⁵ Doubtless, he has found the elusive and primary reason churches fail to perpetuate faithful, theologically sound believers: nothing is happening in the home to solidify the teaching of the church:

¹³Jacobus Koelman, *The Duties of Parents* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 19.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 19-148.

¹⁵Matthew Henry, *Family Religion* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2008), 30-35.

The labor of ministers in instructing youth and feeding the lambs of the flock therefore proves to many [to be] labor in vain, because masters of families do not do their duty in preparing them for public instruction and examining their improvement by it. As mothers are children's best nurses, so parents are, or should be, their best teachers.¹⁶

Family worship events are what assist in setting the preaching and teaching of the church in the minds of the congregation. Simple discussions of sermon texts and illustrations of the truths presented in the preaching are often times the only events that make a formal worship service accessible to children. While preachers need to learn to address every hearer with substantive and understandable content from the word of God, family leaders must follow up.

The Puritans were well known for their commitment to family worship. Their Westminster Directory for Family Worship, written in 1647, stated, "family worship, which ought to be performed by every family, ordinarily morning and evening, consists in prayer, reading the Scriptures, and singing praises."¹⁷ Typically the father read the Scripture but sometimes other family members who were able read. After the Bible was read the father would begin a discussion by asking questions and thinking along several trajectories. Questions were asked about what types of sins were revealed in the passage or what sorts of judgments were threatened or perhaps if there were any duties commended.

Although it may not square with common contemporary caricatures of Puritans, they aimed not only for purity in their doctrine and relevance in their application but also for warmth and affection in their delivery. Questions were encouraged and issues were brought up such as providential events, recent sermons, and

¹⁶Ibid., 36.

¹⁷Joel Beeke, *Living for God's Glory* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2008), 338-39.

many other doctrines and concerns. The singing of Psalms was an important part of this worship and acted as a reminder of faithful doctrine and of the importance of praising God. Family worship was considered the primary means of raising godly children and any father who did not lead his family in daily worship would have had a troubled conscience.¹⁸

The primary key to any method of bringing others to Christ or developing holiness in those who are redeemed is an application of the word of God worked into the soul by the Holy Spirit. Louis Berkhof speaks of the historically orthodox position in indicating that the means of grace are the word of God and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. He contends that "while the Spirit can and does in some respects operate immediately on the soul of the sinner, He has seen fit to bind Himself largely to the use of certain means in the communication of divine grace."¹⁹

The Westminster Shorter Catechism is particularly instructive in a discussion of the means of grace. Questions 85, 88, 89 and their answers bring concise clarity:

Question 85: What doth God require of us that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us for sin?

Answer: To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requireth of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption.

Question 88: What are the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption?

Answer: The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

Question 89: How is the word made effectual to salvation?

Answer: The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching, of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.²⁰

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 604.

²⁰The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, *The Confession of Faith and Catechisms*

The catechism urges a diligent use of the means or channels through which God's grace, with the help of the Holy Spirit, flows. Unfortunately, sometimes an overemphasis on the sovereignty of God reduces the impetus to earnestly involve oneself in the study of God's word, the attentiveness to faithful preaching, and the routine of prayer. Individuals do not make God their debtor when they enter into the means of grace, but he has made promises regarding the means of grace. Sin has earned every person an eternity in hell, so clearly God owes no man anything. On the other hand, those who follow God have every reason to expect that he will keep his promises and should expect that they will come to know God and enjoy his benefits as they become attentive to the ways he has given to know him.

Charles Hodge affirms that both the Holy Spirit and the word of God are essential for spiritual growth to occur. He holds that the Spirit brings life to a dead soul and the Bible is then free to impart its sanctifying influence. Hodge goes on to encourage a continual and industrious increase in one's knowledge of the Bible:

It matters little to us how excellent or how powerful the truths of Scripture may be, if we do not know them. It matters little how well we may know them, if we do not think them. And it matters little how much we think of them, if we cannot see them; and we cannot see them unless the Spirit opens the eyes of our heart.²¹

The Bible declares in Isaiah 55:10-11 that God's Word will accomplish its work in the life of an individual:

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

(Willow Grove, PA: The Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2005), 394-96.

²¹Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson, 1999) 476-78.

The Bible is God's primary means to accomplish his purposes and God here binds himself in a promise that it will be effective. Taking the references to rain and snow from Isaiah 55:10-11 as illustrating the way God works through Scripture, the church is instructed to maximize the application of the Bible in the life of each believer. The more a person is involved in taking in the word of God, the greater opportunity the Holy Spirit has to apply those truths to his heart.

Louis Berkhof contends that the means of grace are not accidental but necessary.²² Some may hold to the idea that investing heavily in learning the ways of God is simply not necessary to enjoy the benefits of redemption and holiness. Those who believe the means of grace are merely accidentals would demand that God operates routinely with a method only rarely seen in the Bible; that of intervention without the word of God. The normal means is through the use of Scripture as noted in Psalm 19:7-9:

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.

It is the "law of the Lord" or the Bible that revives the soul, makes the simple wise, brings joy to the heart, and enlightens the mind. Psalm 19 and Isaiah 55 are only two examples of many that support the necessity of the diligent use of the Bible in enjoying the benefits of godliness.

Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* discusses the means of grace in the context of the church. While Grudem does make slight modifications to Hodge and Berkhof in his explanation of the means of grace there is much agreement and it is instructive for one to think in terms of the church when considering means.²³ Any family

²²Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 608.

²³Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 962-63.

worship program will have a greater impact on church and home if it is an extension of the faithful teaching in a congregation. The church as a whole will benefit from the increased faithfulness in a family and the family will be enabled to stand on the shoulders of those things learned and applied in church.

Historically there was a recognition that fathers must gain the trust of their wives and children and hold this trust for a lifetime if they would be a continued godly influence on a multigenerational legacy. Teenagers turn away for many reasons, but one of the most common reasons is that trust was not gained and kept while they were babies and so when bigger life decisions come their way, the one who should care most is not seen as a trusted advisor.

More is going on when a family sits down to read and discuss the Bible and pray than mere Bible study. A routine of conversation and open dialogue about the truth of God is established. A ready forum to handle life's difficulties is waiting for the evening discussion and Bible application. Family leaders are sharpened because they must prepare winsome discussions and accustom themselves to make Bible study a priority. There is no place for undue authoritarianism in the family leader. These worship times should be characterized by sweet conversation and humble prayer.

Contemporary Recommendations

Jay Adams suggests topics such as the principles of marriage and the duties of men, women, and children for key areas of training that can be discussed during a family worship time.²⁴ Doug Wilson has provided a great service to the church in his specific recommendations for this type of preparation. He calls on parents to prepare their sons

²⁴Jay Adams, *Christian Living in the Home* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972), 44.

for marriage by (1) teaching them what marriage is all about from passages such as 1 Corinthians 6 and 7, Leviticus 18, and Mark 6:18 as well as by their example, (2) teaching them about masculinity, particularly in the areas of disciplined boldness, courage, and strength in adversity, and (3) teaching them what it means to be a gentleman, especially in the areas of responsibility and protection.²⁵ Wilson holds out the grand importance of building trust in the relationship of parents and daughters, as this is the key to preparing them for courtship. He recommends training in modesty and appropriate expressions of attractiveness, preparing young women to be able to respond to all sorts of men: strangers, the ungodly, and those who are honorable, in a way that honors father and mother and indicates her high view of marriage and family.²⁶

A major thrust in family worship is perpetuating Godly principles for future generations. The apostle Paul gives the simple stipulation for believers in choosing marriage partners in 1 Corinthians 7:39; the eligible partners must be “in the Lord.” Determining an appropriate threshold for the spiritual maturity level of life mates is an urgently important matter that should be a key aspect of any family worship routine. By starting the practice of warm, inviting family worship when a family is young, the parents are firmly established as trusted teachers and advisors in every aspect of a child’s life, including the choosing of a marriage partner. This is not a plea for arranged marriages but an admission that the modern age has not brought new found maturity in young adults thus no longer requiring mentoring in the area of life choices. A poor choice in a husband or wife can virtually nullify much of a multi-generational investment in a child and stifle the trajectory of faithfulness and maturity in a family. Abraham recognized this

²⁵Douglas Wilson, *Her Hand in Marriage* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 1997), 33-43.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 45-64.

as he sent his servant to find God's choice in an eligible wife for Isaac. He made a huge investment in time and resources to perpetuate godliness in his home and steward the promises of God.

In *Unbreakable: The Seven Pillars of a Kingdom Family*, Tom Elliff calls those who overlook family devotional time to accounting: "It is in our devotional times . . . that we hear our Master's instructions and discover how to respond to Him."²⁷ Wayne Mack holds that family worship is vital if a family is to enter into the joy of family life God intended.²⁸ Doug Wilson recounts that parents who do not take God seriously in the area of childrearing often say things to those who do enter into childrearing with godly sobriety such as "just wait until he is a teenager" or something similar. Then when children grow up to be obedient in the Lord they may hear comments such as "Oh, that's easy for you to say . . . God gave you good children." Wilson contends that "God gives everyone rotten children" and that the parents must enter into the promises of God and invest themselves in the lives of their children if they would not have them continue to be rotten.²⁹

The family is designed to be a culture and the children who grow up in it will be shaped by it.³⁰ Surely this is the heart of God's charge to Abraham, to establish a godly culture in the home to be used as a springboard for all of life. Wilson summarizes the possibilities of family culture into three categories: (1) because of the sin and

²⁷Tom Elliff, *Unbreakable: The Seven Pillars of a Kingdom Family* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 97.

²⁸Wayne Mack, *Your Family God's Way* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1991), 47.

²⁹Douglas Wilson, *Standing on the Promises* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 1997), 73.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 10.

rebellion of the family there is a rebellious culture in the home, (2) because many Christian parents forget the family is a culture in itself, they allow outside influences to be the primary shapers of their family, and (3) because some Christian parents take God seriously, they establish a culture of godliness in their home.³¹ Children will be shaped, either as God intended biblically by their parents, or otherwise. He calls parents to make a clean break with the modern world's incorrect definition of family and to reject any conformity to the world.³²

Many parents are reluctant and fearful to take upon themselves all of the responsibility for the culture, leadership, and training of their children. Yet, whether they perceive that this responsibility is theirs or not, the fact remains that God has laid the task upon their shoulders and has made accompanying promises and granted the necessary strength to carry out the task. The primary figure in this work is the father. He is to monitor the influences upon the family and teach the Word of God to them.³³ Once Doug Wilson expounds from Scripture that the responsibility for children is with the parents, he then references Matthew 18:6 to establish a most striking admonition. This passage quotes the Lord: "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." The possibility of leading children astray should strike fear in our bones.³⁴ The passage goes further by establishing how far one should go in avoiding sin. Verses 8 and 9 indicate that sin is so detestable, if

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 11.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., 12.

one's hand or foot causes him to sin, it would be better to do without them than to allow sin through them.

The well-worn paths families craft in watching their favorite evening television program or heading out to the soccer field every day can give the impression that family hearts are knit together, but these activities are not designed to address the very real life issues that are suited for family worship. It is no sin to watch a particular television show or play on a soccer team, yet these are often given priority and cannot in themselves provide the adhesive needed to endure as a multi-generational faithful family. Families who thrive in family worship will carve out worship time first without giving it a sense of being a forced, mechanical routine. That family that makes winsome daily worship and biblical conversation a priority only affirms that they are entering into the commands in Deuteronomy 6 to make God the centerpiece of their lives.

Scott Brown captures the necessity for toughness in the calling as faithful parents: “you may get more compassion from church goers if your teen daughter gets pregnant, than if she dresses modestly.”³⁵ Making family worship and discipleship a priority will change the way families look and act and will be a living condemnation of families who choose not to approach life with such sobriety. Proverbs 28:4 indicates that when people keep God's law they bring a sense of condemnation to those who do not. Charles Bridges draws his readers to consider the “appalling recollection of our former influence for evil” and so one should redouble his efforts at redeeming what has been lost by a “protest of consistent godliness.”³⁶

³⁵Scott Brown, *Family Reformation* (Wake Forest, NC: Merchant Adventurers, 2009), 66.

³⁶Charles Bridges, *A Commentary on Proverbs* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 528.

Wilson finds three primary truths from Matthew 18:6 regarding family leadership: (1) parents must be converted so they can be humble and teachable like their children, (2) families should receive children as from the Lord, thus pregnancy, childbearing, and the associated raising of children should be counted as a great honor—for these things are blessings from the Lord, and (3) parents should be sure not to despise their children.³⁷ To despise children would be to brush them aside for the sort of “grown-up officiousness” that the disciples were so sharply rebuked for or to make an “idol of youth” and over indulge them, making the family center on them.³⁸ Wilson’s first point can really neutralize some common difficulties encountered when parents first try to teach their children something. As children get older, transparency and an admission that the parents do not know everything about a given subject can go a long way in forging the relationship between parents and children. The opportunity to learn and discuss issues in family worship greatly assists families as they transition in their relationships from younger children to older children and ultimately to partner in gospel endeavors.

Prior to the industrial revolution, most people lived in small communities and the family was attached to the land. Children were seen as assets to the family farm and the perpetuation of the family enterprise was expected and normal with the sons following in their father’s footsteps. A relationship of warmth and trust was typically nurtured and accomplished between parents and children borne out of the sheer

³⁷Wilson, *Standing on the Promises*, 14.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 73.

necessity to work together for basic needs and because it was unrealistic for one to leave the area.³⁹

Postmodern society finds children most often not in the position of “asset” but of “liability.” This makes the investment required for their spiritual growth to seem empty and foolish since the typical modern family is practically severed when the children reach eighteen years of age. The impetus to nurture family relationships with a view toward parents and children living in close proximity to one another and even working together has become outdated and considered immature by some. Father’s may think twice about heavily investing in the spiritual and vocational future of sons and daughters who will eventually grow up and work for someone else and live far away.

While parents should be willing to set aside certain comforts and perks for the love of Christ and God’s kingdom regarding their children, the gospel promise made in Malachi 4:6, that Christ will “turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers,” must certainly be realized—for there is much ground to be made in the area of family worship. The Malachi passage and others indicate that God has not authorized parents and children to essentially sever their relationship when physical maturity has occurred in the children. The pattern in the Bible is that of parents being heavily involved in the lives of children and grandchildren, which requires mutual submission and a commitment to stay geographically close. This certainly does not preclude the sovereign choices of God in the lives of his people to do with them however he desires; yet, more often than not children move away because of personal preferences

³⁹Philip Lancaster, *Family Man, Family Leader* (San Antonio: Vision Forum, 2003), 24.

merely couched in terms of necessity. In modernity vocational choices have become a priority easily outpacing the historical commitment to keeping a family together. Geographical scattering reduces the positive impact a multigenerational family can have for the kingdom and also neutralizes some of the impetus to work toward relationships that can endure a family business or family missionary endeavor.

Conclusion

Establishing an understanding of the urgent need for family worship and forming the momentum in preparation to succeed in this endeavor will be no small task. Yet there is every reason to believe that God will bless those who enter into the obedience of His word with childlike faith.

Family worship has fallen on hard times, even to the extent that reinstating it would require a Herculean effort similar to that required of William Carey before he entered the mission field. This saint had to convince the churchmen of his day that taking the gospel to foreign lands was an activity of concern to God, let alone commanded. The complacency and apathy present in many churches makes family worship seem like an activity that was only to be read about in history books and carried out by the super-holy who are far removed from the demands of the “real world.”

Further, because family worship is so rare, many cannot say that they have ever even seen it done or grew up in a home where it was practiced. Like Formalist and Hypocrisy in Pilgrim’s Progress, when Christian spoke of the word of God and the seal of the Spirit, they only laughed. What they had not seen they figured they did not need.⁴⁰ What may look like spiritual success in a child will be revealed in its true colors after the

⁴⁰John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 40.

restraints of childhood are removed. Mentioned previously from Voddie Baucham's book, many children leave the church when the constraints of family are removed, but they are likely unredeemed. The effects of saving faith will be seen and the primary beginning place for this faith is in the home, where it is also developed and nurtured.

While the family is the touchstone for relationships in the Bible, spiritual growth occurs in the same way among those who do not come home to houses with children and spouses. Whether one thinks of friendship on the basis of Proverbs 18:24, "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother," or pastoral care in terms of 1 Thessalonians 2:7, "But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children" the connotations of family still apply. The relationships that one has outside of a biological family are alluded to in the familiar terms of mother, father, brother, and sister for a number of reasons, not the least of which is to assist in measuring how one relates to others.

Relationships of employer to employee and neighbor to neighbor are included in this responsibility to teach and learn the ways of God. Historically, faithful employers sensed fatherly responsibilities over their employees to the extent not only of providing physical provision but spiritual direction as well. Modern business relationships and the hostility toward the gospel experienced in many work places has made spiritual care more difficult to accomplish for the caring business leader, but not impossible. Those trusting in Christ cannot escape their responsibility in proclaiming the gospel to and nurturing spiritual growth in those around them with the care and concern of a family member. Navigating the difficulties of spiritual leadership in the workplace or among neighborhood friends may require more intentionality and determination than parents use when directing their efforts towards children.

The apostle Paul gives instructions to the church in the Pastoral Epistles regarding their care for other members of the congregation in terms of family relationships:

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. (1 Tim 5:1-2)

But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. (Titus 2:1-6)

The church is described in terms of the family and has been given the freedom and responsibility to assist each other in spiritual growth. Family worship is not just for biological mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, it is for that expansive and all-inclusive “neighbor” as well, the one Jesus refers to eight times in the gospels that the Christian is to love as himself.

The aspects of hospitality combined with family worship is an area of church life that can reap huge spiritual dividends and should be seen as a natural outgrowth of family worship. When individual believers and Christian families invite others into their home, the routine of family worship becomes a great way to draw others into the ways of God in a warm, inviting atmosphere. Homes with longstanding habits of family worship will easily be able to invite guests to read the Bible and sing a Psalm or hymn after the dinner conversation. It is also a great time to ask about prayer requests and discuss activities at church.

Inviting others can also be the beginning of a weekly neighborhood Bible study which ultimately is simply opening up one’s home for others to take part in family worship. Coworkers and other acquaintances can be easily included and not feel “trapped” into a high pressure evangelistic discussion. When families make a period of

worship a normal routine it will also appear that way to others and will not seem like a forced situation. In this way we leave open the door for further conversation and gospel opportunities.

The practice of hospitality, or having people in one's home for a meal and fellowship with the intentional purpose of introducing them to the gospel, is typically overlooked as an important part of church life. However, the Bible calls Christians to consider each person a neighbor and refers to those in the church family as brothers and sisters. With this in mind, churches would do well to cultivate family worship not only to bring children of faithful families to Christ and to grow in grace but as a primary means of gospel outreach.

Congregations of churches often become the social network of its members. Hopefully if the members have not yet formed the habit of having the unredeemed in their homes they have begun having fellow members of the church over. These opportunities provide the best ways to train others in the area of family worship and are often the way others learn the mechanics of a simple worship session. These times with trusted members who are more spiritually mature can solidify the nature and necessity of family worship.

The elders of churches would do well to routinely have families in their home to address not only the mechanics of a family worship session but to bring the Bible to bear upon situations in the visiting family or individual. In this way the practicality of home worship sessions is also highlighted. Church leaders could go so far as to intentionally plan seasons of family worship in which they cover specific areas of the Christian life. For instance, they could plan to cover biblical concepts involving courtship on the Thursdays of a certain month in their home worship events and invite a

few young adults hoping to marry or perhaps they could consider the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints for new believers.

The concepts of family worship are simple, biblically sound, and historically trusted. The practice of investing daily in the word of God and leading others to do the same is one of the most far reaching and important things any person can do.

CHAPTER 4
TEACHING AND IMPROVING FAMILY WORSHIP
AT THE MILITARY CHAPEL, PARRIS
ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA

On May 8, 2011, a four-week preparation period began during which I outlined a series of sermon messages designed to explain the underlying biblical principles of family and personal worship as well as provide content and direction for how to have a session of personal or family worship in one's home, based on the Lord's Day sermon each week. This preparation period also included initial surveys, family interviews, and the establishment of a mentoring cohort within the congregation. I encouraged the congregation to earnestly enter into the development of this habit of family worship to have more joy in Christ, sense a greater fellowship with God, be more useful in gospel labors, and ultimately enjoy a greater level of obedience to God.

Pre-Project Survey

During the first Lord's Day of the project, I handed out the Pre-Project Survey (Appendix 1) with the regular worship folder and used extra time in the announcement period to tell the congregation about the project and explain the survey. I estimated that the survey would take about 10 minutes to complete and ensured the congregation that it was completely voluntary and that their responses would remain anonymous. I collected completed surveys after the worship service and invited them to take them home if needed and bring them back the next week. Out of the approximately 30 surveys I handed out, I received 11 back. The complete results are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Pre-project survey responses

Question	Answer										
	Between 1 (strongly disagree) and 10 (strongly agree)										
a. Family worship is the practice in which families or individuals no longer attend church but worship God in their home.	3	1	1	1	5	1	5	1	3	1	3
b. Family worship is the practice in which families or individuals have a time of devotion during the weekday in which some or all of the following elements are present: bible reading, biblical teaching, prayer, and the singing of hymns.	7	10	10	10	5	10	5	9	8	10	7
c. Family or personal worship is discussed in the Bible.	7	10	8	8	8	10	7	7	8	10	5
d. Family worship was practiced in my home when I was a child.	2	8	1	8	4	4	1	6	6	3	1
e. Family or personal worship is a part of my (or my family's) daily routine.	5	10	8	10	2	7	6	8	8	7	10
f. I have never heard of the concept of family or personal worship.	6	1	1	1	4	1	3	5	1	1	3
g. I grew up in a Bible-believing church.	10	10	1	10	10	10	2	7	10	7	10
h. I am interested in learning about family or personal worship.	7	10	7	8	4	10	3	5	7	10	7
i. I am convinced that family or personal worship is a practice I should be involved in.	7	10	10	10	4	10	3	5	10	10	5
j. I am not sure about how to have a time of personal or family worship.	6	1	1	1	7	1	4	2	3	8	5
k. I think that family or personal worship is very important for a Christian.	7	10	10	10	7	10	4	10	9	10	7
l. I expect to begin having family or personal worship soon. (If already having family or personal worship, please skip this question).					3	10	5				

Table 1—Continued. Pre-project survey responses

m. I don't need to begin family or personal worship because I go to church every week.	4	1	1	1	6	1	6	1	3	1	3
n. I am satisfied with the amount of time I spend studying the Bible and praying.	5	3	3	6	5	1	4	10	5	1	7
o. This is the number of hours I spend reading or studying my Bible and other Christian literature every week.	3	5	4	6	0	3	1	11	1	1	21
p. This is the number of hours I spend praying every week.	2	5	1	6	1	1	1	4	1	2	21

The survey results are not unexpected. Most of the congregation indicated that they were unsatisfied with their current approach to Bible study and prayer and saw the need for family or personal worship in their homes. They indicated that worship in their homes was very important and expressed a high level of interest in implementing this into their lives. Most did not grow up in homes with family worship.

Based on conversations with the congregation during our fellowship meals and the results of the survey, I believe my plan to provide the congregation with a simple structure for family worship with engaging content readily applied to each family or individual, will be a helpful approach in addressing the issue of family worship and Christian maturity.

Sermon Series and the Home Worship Help

The project consisted of a series of twelve sermons combined with the production and use of a “Home Worship Help” designed to give direction and content for several sessions of family or personal worship each week and to prepare the congregation to listen more attentively and apply the sermon. Each “Home Worship Help” contains six sections intended to assist each family or individual (see Appendix

16-27). The first section has catechism questions and answers taken from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The congregation is at a military chapel and therefore from a mixture of Protestant traditions, thus the Westminster Catechism was chosen for its familiarity and acceptance. The next section was for prayer concerns to encourage the routine and habit of family prayer.

The third section provided key questions that could be answered from briefly studying the biblical text for the sermon. These “Helps” were given a week ahead of the sermon, so the congregation did not have knowledge of the sermon from which to answer the biblical questions. I decided to use this preparatory approach instead of asking questions of the sermon after it was preached to hopefully provide more momentum in listening and unifying the congregation. The fourth section was a passage of Scripture for the family to work on memorizing and meditating upon. These spiritual disciplines are not typically practiced by many in the congregation, as indicated by the small amount of time they spend each week reading their bibles and praying. The family interviews also confirmed that most do not have a habit of having family worship.

The fifth section contained the lyrics of a hymn sung in the worship service designed to assist them in singing in their homes during their worship time. The hope was that the hymn would encourage them to consider the importance of faithful hymnody, elevate the quality of congregational singing, and overcome inhibitions of singing in their homes.

The sixth section of the “Home Worship Help” was an adapted portion of one of the individual country reports from Jason Mandryk’s *Operation World*. This section informed the congregation about the state of evangelical Christianity in a particular country of the world with recommendations for prayer and praise and is amplified each week in the pastoral prayer along with the congregation’s other prayer concerns. All six

sections of the “Home Worship Help” fit on the front and back of a regular piece of paper so they were not cumbersome to produce or use.

While the “Home Worship Help” was primarily based on the following week’s sermon, the worship bulletin contained some helps for the current sermon. The most popular of these helps was a word search with key words they should hear in the sermon. Once again, this was an attempt to get the words of God into their hearts.

The chapel has historically had a very short period before the regular sermon for a “children’s sermon.” I use this period to introduce and solidify one key aspect of the morning sermon. I typically have photographs or some actual object to illustrate the main point of the morning message and also provide the children with a coloring page of an additional picture that amplifies the sermon. The service is completely age-integrated so I make every effort to address children and adults in their various spiritual conditions; whether they are long-term growing believers, those being drawn to Christ initially, those who think they are believers but really are not, those who do not think they have yet entered the Kingdom but probably have, and those not even considering the things of God. I have been encouraged by faithful preachers of the past to simplify the proclamation of the Word more and more and I believe the Lord has blessed these efforts by better sermon reception by the young and old.

The mentoring cohort was made up of two military officers who had been faithful in the congregation, were eager followers of Christ, and were not afraid to provide me some direction and critique as the project moved forward. They encouraged me to stay simple and direct in my preaching, and to take pains to explain family worship and its benefits. I checked with them practically each week on the clarity of each aspect of the sermon and its relation to the concept of family worship, as well as other aspects of the service.

The beginning of the project marked the completion of a series of sermons in which I preached one sermon on each book of the Bible, finishing with the Minor Prophets. The plan was to continue the current Sunday School program involving the Catechism for Boys and Girls in the children's class and the Westminster Catechism in the adult's class through the entire project period since it reinforced the concept of family worship as it can be worked on easily in the home. The monthly fellowship meals provided an excellent opportunity to interview families about the project and their expected interest and participation (see Appendix 3 for interview questions).

The first three sermons of the series were from Ephesians 5:22-6:4, Genesis 18:17-22, Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Judges 2:1-10, and 1 Samuel 3:10-18. These sermons provided the theological and historical foundation for implementing family worship. They were designed to answer the question "why?" of family worship. The other nine sermons were designed to answer the questions "what?" and "how?" regarding family worship. These were intended, along with the associated "Home Worship Help," to provide the actual content and structure for families or individuals to have periods of worship in their homes. The latter nine sermons concerned particularly important and interesting parables and narrative accounts from the Bible that in turn can be the basis for applying important truths in the lives of families and individuals (see Appendix 4-15 for sermon outlines).

The first sermon, from Ephesians 5:22-6:4, highlighted the special relationship parents have with children and the expectations and commands God gives family leaders in not only raising children but also in simply living life with them and in front of them. This passage provided insightful direction on how to live a life of joyful obedience, taking into account God's design in marriage of the husband's loving leadership and the wife's submissive partnership in the great task of gospel faithfulness

as they bring up godly children. I highlighted the idea that the admonition in Ephesians 6:4 to “bring them [children] up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” is not intended to be one small subset of their life preparation but is to be the foundation of each aspect of their lives. I also broadened the admonition in application to the church by introducing the concept that as a church family we should sense some responsibility in the faithful godly leadership of the children in the congregation, whether they belong to us or not. This passage calls one to see the comprehensiveness of a relationship to Christ and its impact on everything from community sports to formal education to doing chores.

The second sermon from Genesis 18:17-22 and Deuteronomy 6:1-9 was a historical consideration of the importance of raising godly children as well as a look at the foundational command to create cultures in the home that reflect the character of God. Deuteronomy 6 records a breathtakingly comprehensive admonition to intentionally insert the words and ways of God into the fabric of life and allow them to structure and inform all that is done. Genesis 18:19 provides a compact summary of Abraham’s great task of entering into God’s promises. This passage sets forward the idea that one aspect of Abraham’s ability to enter into the promises of God is through the means of obeying God in the way he leads his family. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah stands as a powerful reminder of what happens when families reject the ways of God and turn away from him.

The third and last of the introductory and explanatory sermons for the project came from Judges 2 and 1 Samuel 3. In this sermon I drew attention to the impact Joshua’s faithfulness had on an entire generation of people and consider the charge God gave to Joshua at the beginning of his leadership emphasizing his adherence to the Word of God in every aspect of his leadership. I addressed the positive consequences Joshua

enjoyed through his faithful attentiveness of the things of God and the way he inculcated them in those around him, and also the terrible and destructive consequences of failing to take seriously the things of God as experienced by Israel as they failed to be steadfast in godliness after Joshua's death. The passage in 1 Samuel 3 records the difficulties Eli's unfaithful sons caused in the life of Israel and indicates that perhaps some aspects of Eli's leadership of them could have been better. I make the point that faithful family leadership is not guaranteed by God to produce faithfulness, but that God has given great means in bringing up godly families and that Christians have reason to expect that he will bless their diligence in the matter.

After the introductory and explanatory sermons, I moved into nine weeks of sermons specifically designed to teach different aspects of applied theology and life skills and encourage the use of the home worship helps to improve or begin family worship. Since the project followed about seventy weeks of preaching sermons on each book of the Bible, the parables and historical narratives chosen for the "content and application" portion of the project could be set in the context of the whole Bible. Each week I reminded the congregation about the family worship emphasis and occasionally encouraged them with very brief highlights from family worship in my own home.

The first of these was on the parable "The Servants Waiting for Their Lord," from Luke 12:35-40 on the subject of being ready for Christ. In this sermon I introduced the genre of parables in the Bible and gave some general hermeneutic guidelines to assist Bible students in understanding and applying them. I began with this passage because it shows the urgency with which one should approach the things of God, particularly the gospel and the need to respond to God in faith and repentance.

The second of these was on the parable "The Sower and the Soils," from Matthew 13 on the subject of wasted faith, true faith, and the state of souls. I addressed

how to hear the Word of God in such a way as to benefit and encourage the congregation to be wary of the aspects of culture that would tend to make listening and retaining the Word of God difficult. I drew their attention to things they can do to maximize the benefit of the worship service, sermon, and family worship.

Next was the parable “The Unmerciful Servant” from Matthew 18:23-35, on the subject that the redeemed have no grounds to be unmerciful and that God’s parental forgiveness is conditioned somehow on forgiveness of others. Forgiveness is such an important topic in each relationships and only through Christ can one have the ability to truly forgive others. This passage provides a great opportunity to discuss grace and mercy and how in receiving this from God one can in turn invest it in other relationships.

The parable “The Good Samaritan” from Luke 10:30-37, was highlighted next. In this passage one can see that costly mercy is an aspect of saving faith and also an effect of being redeemed. The substitutionary aspect of the atonement is addressed as the lawyer is told not what he must do to be saved but ultimately what must be done by God in order for him to be saved. The question, “Who is my neighbor?” is answered by considering, “Who is a legitimate recipient of my love and mercy?” Lastly the sweetness of true brotherly love is discussed with application.

The eighth sermon was on the parable “The Great Supper” from Luke 14:15-24, on the subject of the universal gospel invitation that many will reject due to an inability to establish right priorities and the anger of God in its rejection. This passage addresses the cultural tendency to place concerns of the body over concerns of the soul and the tendency to place temporal matters over eternal matters.

The parable “The Prodigal Son,” was the subject of the ninth sermon that considered the relentless and patient pursuit of the merciful father, the true repentance of

the redeemed, and the potential quiet and terrible disobedience of others. This parable contains the most depth of any considered and is the apparent favorite from anecdotal evidence. The attitudes and actions of the younger brother reveal much about the ungrateful and demanding nature of mankind. The real surprise seems to be the hidden discontentedness of the older brother and his blatant refusal to obey his father and see the beauty in redemption. The parable also reveals the breathtaking mercy shown by the heavenly Father.

The tenth sermon was on the parable “The Talents” from Matthew 25:14-30, on the subject of gifts, how to use them, and how God has given them out. Stewardship is such an important key in service to God and others and this passage provides the occasion to discuss one’s responsibility in gifts. It is typical for one to consider it a matter of indifference to fritter away a God-given talent, yet this passage speaks of the importance of vocation and of the intent God has in allowing gifts to be the means of kingdom work.

The last two sermons were from Old Testament narrative passages on the lives of Joseph and Samson. The life of trust and suffering highlighted in the account of Joseph in the book of Genesis provides such rich teaching and example that can be referred to again and again in day-to-day lives. Joseph’s steadfast devotion to the goodness of God and refusal to stray from God’s life principles of integrity and obedience can bring much animation to the periods of family worship. Lastly, the life of Samson in the book of Judges is expounded. The Bible’s “strongman” presents an excellent opportunity to discuss the best steward of God’s strength and the importance of recognizing true weakness, and celebrating it to the glory of God.

Post-Project Survey

The post-project survey was handed out the week of the last sermon.

Unfortunately this also marked my last week as the chapel pastor due to receiving orders to the Second Marine Regiment at Camp Lejeune. I gathered the returned surveys on this Sunday as well as the next and only received four in return. I think my family interviews and cohort discussions were more valuable than the surveys, but I regret the small sample. I expect the transition at the chapel had much to do with this state of affairs.

Table 2. Post-project survey responses

Question	Answer Between 1 (strongly disagree) and 10 (strongly agree)			
a. Family worship is the practice in which families or individuals no longer attend church but worship God in their home.	1	1	1	1
b. Family worship is the practice in which families or individuals have a time of devotion during the weekday in which some or all of the following elements are present: bible reading, biblical teaching, prayer, and the singing of hymns.	10	10	10	10
c. I am convinced that worshipping God at home during the week is very important.	10	10	10	10
d. If I am to obey what God has said in the Bible and apply the principles about spiritual growth and worship, then I need to be worshipping God at home as well as at church with the congregation.	10	9	10	10
e. The recent emphasis on worship in our homes has led me to begin this practice.	10	9	8	7
f. Since I have begun learning about Family and Personal Worship and actually doing it at home, I feel closer to God.	10	10	10	10
g. Since I have begun having worship at home I have more joy in Christ and am more convinced of God's direction in my life.	10	10	10	10

Conclusion

This project represents what I believe to be the greatest contribution I can have in the life of a military family as their pastor. The demands, separation, potential danger, and military culture make resiliency a very important aspect of families and individuals associated with the nation's defense. My goal of presenting the biblical mandate of responsibility in the matter of spiritual growth and worship along with its grand impact of spiritual resiliency will hopefully resonate and reap dividends for God's people in the future.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

Introduction

This chapter presents an evaluation of the project. I appraise the research data and consider the information gained in the mentoring cohort to determine how the project fared concerning the stated goals. I also take a critical look at the methodology used in the project and consider its strengths and weaknesses. Finally, I consider things I would do differently now that I have the benefit of hindsight in the project.

This evaluation also includes theological and personal reflections on the project concerning its impact on the chapel fellowship and my own ministry and relationship to Christ. This aspect of the project culminates not only a multi-month emphasis for the congregation but a multi-year educational investment that will hopefully be greatly useful to the kingdom of God in the future.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

As stated in chapter 1, the purpose of this project was to encourage the members of the chapel to improve or establish family worship in their homes in order to perpetuate godliness in themselves and their families for generations to come and to build resiliency in preparation for the demanding aspects of being a military family. Based on the historical conviction of those faithful pastors of bygone days, which is closely aligned to the assignment given by the word of God regarding pastoral ministry, it would be hard to argue that the project's purpose was not a key priority for any spiritual leader.

Even the best of purposes cannot be tended to at any given moment in the life of a congregation. It would have been foolish to attempt such a robust emphasis on family worship if I had only a very short relationship with the congregation, or if there were external circumstances drawing away the corporate attention. Thankfully, I had been associated with the congregation for the two years prior to the project, although only one year as pastor. Being previously persuaded of the importance of biblical literacy, the project began on the heels of an entire year of preaching a sermon on each book of the Bible, which I believe prepared them for a better hearing regarding the importance of family worship.

Even with the unique ecclesiastical situation present in a military chapel and the relatively short tenures of the chaplains who pastor them, I believe the purpose of the project and the timing of the project was generously attended by an approving Providence. Because of the intense tempo of military life, a ready impetus for resiliency is ever-present which provided even more encouragement to enter into the propositions presented in the project.

Evaluation of the Project Goals

The first goal was for the congregation to be persuaded of the biblical mandate to honor God and feed their souls through regular individual and family worship. The thought of having an organized time of family or individual worship outside of the congregational worship is an intimidating idea to many. Based on my conversations with the mentoring cohort, as well as those with the congregation, there is agreement with the survey results that most are convinced of the fact that God calls on individuals and families to worship outside of the stated meetings of the church and that there is great soul-benefit in this activity.

The second goal was for the individuals and families of the chapel to begin

having regular worship times in their homes with a view of persevering in it. The project would not be much of a success if we only had family worship for the duration of the special emphasis without the intention and motivation to continue making it a priority. Checking up on perseverance is of course a bit difficult. The Post-Project Survey indicated that those who took the survey were persuaded of its importance and had begun the practice but it cannot indicate if they are keeping up with regular family worship. Because I am no longer at the chapel I do not regularly see the participants, so I cannot check on them in casual conversation.

The third goal was for the congregation of the chapel to begin to enjoy the benefits of having regular family worship by gaining greater joy in the Holy Spirit, deeper assurance of God's love, and more confidence and trust in Christ as the way ahead. I was very interested in having our people enjoy the resilience and encouragement God intends for them as they make Him a greater priority in their lives. The effectiveness of the project regarding this goal is probably the hardest to capture. The survey results indicate that the congregation is entering into the benefits of greater joy and assurance but without in depth probing with each person in the congregation, it is difficult to flesh this out.

The fourth goal was a hope to become a better experiential preacher in addressing each member of the congregation and in preparing simple home worship helps associated with the weekly sermon material that could be easily implemented. The mentoring cohort was consistent in their appreciation and commendation of my preaching and the children seemed genuinely engaged in the children's sermons at the beginning of each worship service and were typically attentive during the rest of the service as well. Biblical narratives and parables were chosen as the content of most of the sermons and thus the family worship material because these genres are more accessible and familiar to

the congregation and easier to garner the attention of the daydreamer or child in the worship service. Making the home worship helps available for every sermon, which would be my intent were I still the pastor, would be more demanding with different genres and portions of scripture.

Considering that families were going to be using the sermon and the associated Scripture for family worship and conversation during the week helped shape and simplify the sermons. This consideration also assisted in gaining and keeping the attention of every member of the congregation with some success.

Strengths of the Project

The project seemed well suited to the chapel congregation and addressed an area of spiritual growth directly related to a great need among the military—resilience. As mentioned previously, I had a relationship with the congregation of about 50 for a few years before the formal implementation of the project, and this greatly assisted the effectiveness. It is atypical for a military chaplain to be able to have a three-year relationship with any group of people, much less a chapel congregation, since most Navy Chaplains do not serve in chapel settings. Compared to many other military ministry settings, this provided a rare opportunity for a ministry project for which I am very thankful.

More often than not, the tenure of a military chapel pastor is measured in months, not years, and this seems to greatly impact the intentionality and foresight in preaching and teaching. It is understandable that a pastor who does not expect to be preaching very long at one location will have a natural inclination not to set long-term goals and introduce a drawn out preaching series.

The congregation was familiar with more experiential preaching and was clearly comfortable with my commitment to invest in them long-term and not merely try

to “make it through Sunday” with the sermon material and preparation. When I became the pastor, I immediately began to encourage greater effectiveness in listening among adults and children by more energetic and engaged preaching and by creating worship help material that directed their attention to active sermon listening and application. These initiatives were balanced with the limited time I had to produce these materials as well as the additional commitments involved in military ministry. In my case this involved ministering to about 1,500 Marines and family members who did not attend the chapel.

Fortunately, because the family worship emphasis was coupled with other aspects of congregational life such as faithful and intentional preaching, teaching, listening, and learning, if my hoped for end state of many homes with persistent family worship was not met, none of the activity and energy was wasted. Inherent in the project was an application of what I had been learning in the doctoral seminars and reading, especially regarding biblical theology and preaching. What I learned made a huge impact on my preparation, preaching, and perceived tasks as a pastor.

Weaknesses of the Project

One weakness in the project was that after the initial three sermons on the underlying biblical and historical basis of family worship there was only scanty information on the mechanics of family worship. While the congregation was generally consistent in attendance and though I highlighted the worship helps each week with an occasional anecdote about family worship, the first three sermons were indeed crucial to the project’s momentum.

A second weakness in the methodology of the project was the short period of time left for post-project assessment. The week after the final project sermon I preached an installation sermon for the chaplain who took my place as pastor and I moved 400

miles away to our next duty assignment. In accord with the original project plan, I set aside two weeks for gathering the final surveys but there was no real possibility to check on families weeks later to see how they were doing with family worship. I felt very fortunate to be able to fully finish what was intended, even though I had to move to another assignment earlier than expected. The new pastor was there only a few months, so this was not something with which he could follow up.

A third weakness in the project had to do with the limitation I had in teaching opportunities to present the material on family worship. We began a Sunday School program during my tenure at the chapel, but had no other stated meeting of the congregation to present any additional material. I was limited to a one-hour worship service each week that included about thirty minutes of preaching. The dynamics of preaching do not provide the best opportunity to walk through a family worship session, but this was the only option available. I encouraged the few families that attended Sunday School to use some of the material for family worship and discipleship, yet those who attended were already the most attentive to this emphasis.

What I Would Do Differently

I would want to do several things differently were I to do this project again. I would like to make much better use of the mentoring cohort and gain more in depth information on whether or not I was explaining the meat of the project well enough for the participants to grasp the concepts. I would also want to treat them more like a small circle of deep learners in order to invest more time with the expectation of closer adherence to the project's goals. I would develop sermon evaluation forms that they could fill out each week to not only assist me in being a better preacher but also help make sure I was staying on target with the progress of the project. These topics were addressed in general but the insights gained could have been more useful had I been more

intentional in data gathering.

Another thing I would do differently is to emphasize more of the basics of actually having a time of family worship. I went over the simple portions of a family worship session, however, I think I would reinforce these steps better and more frequently and also share the benefits of a greater sense of the presence of God, a family that is more comfortable talking about theological issues, father and mother more comfortable in leading and being a part of family worship, children more engaged in the family, and ultimately a congregation more united in their devotion to Christ.

Theological Reflections

This project has served to bolster my conviction about the urgent need for the church to rediscover the benefits of family worship. Doubtless the concept and importance of biblically minded families has reached new lows in the present day and this phenomenon has come at a time when the family is needed most. Families huddled together gaining strength from the word of God and countering the wicked culture with the truths found in the Bible is a desperately needed practice. Unfortunately this practice is unknown or overlooked by the vast majority of the church and her leaders and is seen as boring or outdated.

Parents and church leaders lament the morass unwitting children must endure day in and day out but sometimes fail to see an important solution in addressing and countering the issues. Every member of this shamelessly secular society is inundated with things that are untrue and immoral, yet little or nothing is done to wash away this filth with the word of God on a daily basis. The historical understanding of the Bible's remedy included the habit of family worship.

I am persuaded that even as important as I believe family worship is as a solution to a multitude of ills, I have failed as a church leader in some measure to be

effective in leading God's people to implement the practice. While I can honestly say my family has been faithful in the routine of daily family worship, energetically attended by children of all ages and warmly practiced for over ten years, this has not always been the case. Before that time, I was pastoring a church and did little to emphasize the habit and benefits of family worship. Even as one who was committed to the Bible and its teachings, I did not catch or understand the concept of family worship until it was emphasized at a church we attended during my first assignment as a Navy Chaplain.

One reason that may make the implementation of family worship difficult is that many times there is satisfaction with a certain level of spiritual discipline and it is only by being somewhat discontent with one's spiritual status that will lead a person to look for more of God. There may also be a level of acceptance with the false idea that only certain aspects of one's life are in the realm of spirituality, thus many go looking elsewhere when addressing the difficulties life brings.

Lastly, working on and preparing for this project has reinforced my conviction in the necessity for pastors to be lifelong students of theology and its application in the people they are called to serve. It has strengthened my desire to bring uncton-filled preaching to any willing to hear and given fresh insight into how a unified plan of preaching on topics that are fleshed out in the laboratories of family worship week after week can sanctify the congregation.

Personal Reflections

This project has been in some ways a culminating event but also in many ways an encouragement to not grow weary in spiritual disciplines. The doctor of ministry studies have truly opened up the concept of applying the whole Bible to all of life. Studying, preaching, and applying the unified, Christ-centered master plan of God

concerning his creation has energized me to be more attentive in stewarding the opportunities he has given me for gospel ministry. It has also given me much more confidence not only in the word of God but in my ability to apply God's word to the myriad of problems I encounter as a chaplain serving Marines.

Family worship is similar to other spiritual disciplines in that it often takes months or years to be able to look back and detect effectiveness and impact. The culture drives a person to expect quick fixes for everything but God does not normally work this way. This project has solidified my understanding of the sowing and reaping principle and has under girded its rightness as well as its joy. The importance of spiritual feeding for each individual upon the word of God is daunting and takes work, but this project has revealed the great worth in the effort.

There are other aspects of family worship that may be overlooked by families and individuals simply trying to read the Bible routinely in their homes. This project has revealed the importance of family worship in the practice of hospitality. The Bible regards hospitality as an important means of reconciling men, women, boys, and girls to God. Faithful believers cannot escape the responsibility given by God to share the gospel with others and family worship is one of the best ways to accomplish this great task. When God's people truly invest in relationships with others to share the gospel intentionally with them, asking them over for a meal is a great way to persuade them of genuine concern.

Family worship is also a wonderful method to address certain aspects of the Christian faith to believers. When a church leader or spiritually mature member of the church covers certain topics in their family worship sessions, others can take advantage of these growth opportunities by being a part of the family worship session.

Conclusion

During the months of May through August 2011, I attempted to inculcate the spiritual discipline of family worship into the lives of the congregation at the military chapel at Parris Island, South Carolina. The project included a series of twelve sermons which were part of a unified plan to provide teaching, not only in the mechanics of having a time of family worship, but also the content of those home worship times. Building resilience for the demands of the military lifestyle and encouraging the congregation to grow in their knowledge of God and usefulness in the kingdom will hopefully be realized in these families as a result of their involvement.

APPENDIX 1

PRE-PROJECT SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to provide an indication of the congregation's understanding of family or personal worship and their commitment to the practice of family or personal worship. This research is being conducted by Chaplain Patrick Joyner for purposes of a doctoral project. In this research, you will be asked to indicate your understanding of family or personal worship and your commitment to continuing the practice or implementing it in your home. 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.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly		Disagree		Uncertain			Agree		Strongly
Disagree									Agree

- a. _____ Family worship is the practice in which families or individuals no longer attend church but worship God in their home.
- b. _____ Family worship is the practice in which families or individuals have a time of devotion during the weekday in which some or all of the following elements are present: bible reading, biblical teaching, prayer, and the singing of hymns.
- c. _____ Family or personal worship is discussed in the Bible.
- d. _____ Family worship was practiced in my home when I was a child.
- e. _____ Family or personal worship is a part of my (or my family's) daily routine.
- f. _____ I have never heard of the concept of family or personal worship.
- g. _____ I grew up in a Bible-believing church.
- h. _____ I am interested in learning about family or personal worship.
- i. _____ I am convinced that family or personal worship is a practice I should be involved in.
- j. _____ I am not sure about how to have a time of personal or family worship.

- k. _____ I think that family or personal worship is very important for a Christian.
- l. _____ I expect to begin having family or personal worship soon. (If already having family or personal worship, please skip this question).
- m. _____ I don't need to begin family or personal worship because I go to church every week.
- n. _____ I am satisfied with the amount of time I spend studying the Bible and praying.
- o. _____ This is the number of hours I spend reading or studying my Bible and other Christian literature every week.
- p. _____ This is the number of hours I spend praying every week.

APPENDIX 2

POST-PROJECT SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to provide an indication of the congregation's understanding of family or personal worship and their commitment to the practice of family or personal worship. This research is being conducted by Chaplain Patrick Joyner for purposes of a doctoral project. In this research, you will be asked to indicate your understanding of family or personal worship and your commitment to continuing the practice or implementing it in your home. 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.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly		Disagree		Uncertain			Agree		Strongly
Disagree									Agree

- a. _____ Family worship is the practice in which families or individuals no longer attend church but worship God in their home.
- b. _____ Family worship is the practice in which families or individuals have a time of devotion during the weekday in which some or all of the following elements are present: bible reading, biblical teaching, prayer, and the singing of hymns.
- c. _____ I am convinced that worshipping God at home during the week is very important.
- d. _____ If I am to obey what God has said in the Bible and apply the principles about spiritual growth and worship, then I need to be worshipping God at home as well as at church with the congregation.
- e. _____ The recent emphasis on worship in our homes has led me to begin this practice.
- f. _____ Since I have begun learning about Family and Personal Worship and actually doing it at home, I feel closer to God.
- g. _____ Since I have begun having worship at home I have more joy in Christ and am more convinced of God's direction in my life.

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- a. Had you ever heard of the idea of family or home worship before the emphasis at the chapel?
- b. What do you think is meant with the term family worship?
- c. Do you think you would ever be able to have a short time of worship in your home where you simply read the Bible, perhaps with a short discussion on the reading and then had a time of prayer, maybe even singing a hymn sometimes?
 - a. Can you think of any benefits to having a time of worship in your home?
- d. Can you think of any difficulties in having a time of worship in your home?
- e. Would you believe it if I said that God expects Christians to have times of private and home worship?
- f. How much time would you say you give to praying and reading the Bible each week?
- g. Have you ever used Worship Helps I have been giving out each week since I became the chapel pastor which have a catechism question, memory verse, Bible reading guide, and discussion questions on the sermon?

APPENDIX 4

SERMON OUTLINES

Sermon 1—Ephesians 5:22-6:4 God’s Direction for Families

1. Intro—Ephesians 5:15-21 – being controlled by the Spirit, thankfully redeeming time, mutual submission
2. The wife’s response to husband, God
 - a. Submission, recognizing importance of headship of husband and the ultimate headship of Christ
 - b. General explanation that all must submit to someone
 - i. Government
 - ii. Employer
 - iii. Family
 - iv. God
 - c. Importance of choosing a husband in the will of God
 - d. Recognition that women find loving their husbands easier than respecting them
 - e. Indicate that the bulk of the command given to the husband – he is the one with greater responsibility
3. The husband’s response to wife, God
 - a. The love for her is modeled by Christ loving the church
 - b. Because of the oneness – emphasize the investment perspective of loving wife
 - c. Recognition that men find respecting their wives easier than loving them
 - d. Address gentleness, loving leadership
 - e. Responsibility to pour the Word of God into her (and family) – its cleansing effect
 - f. Importance of needing to be spiritually ahead of the wife in order to lead her (you must make some progress if this is not the case)
4. The mystery in God using the marriage of a man and a woman to illustrate His love for the church
5. The husband’s responsibility with the children
 - a. The wife’s supporting role
 - b. Why emphasize the “helpmeet” aspect – because men have a tendency to reduce their God-given role to “breadwinner”

Sermon 2—Genesis 18:17-22 and Deuteronomy 6:1-19 The Great Task

1. Intro – the impact of bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki
2. Gen 18:17-22
 - a. God affirms His earlier promise of a son for Abraham and Sarah
 - b. God entrusts the perpetuation of His ways and character and the blessing of future generations upon Abraham’s faithfulness and attention
 - c. Little difference between this and the Fifth Commandment which affirms faithful parenting as the primary means of perpetuating faith and blessing to future generations
 - d. The language and intentionality and authority, “...I have chosen him that he may command his children and household after him...” – the word “command” the same word [sae-wa] used in the context of the 10 Commandments
 - e. This authority is held in the tension of kindness and discernment as the key to leading children with this kind of urgent message and way of life is given in last week’s text...Eph 6...not to embitter children (many see this as the command...it isn’t...the command is to teach them and lead them in God’s way and while doing it not to embitter them and give them reasons to reject God and His ways
 - f. Abraham is given here an urgent and vital task and God’s purposes with His creation are entrusted to this means of propagation
 - g. God didn’t tell Abraham to make himself famous in business, retire early, look for the so-called good life, etc. (though he was successful in business and was a military leader)
 - h. The consequences if Abraham fails are displayed in gut-wrenching horror as Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed because of their unfaithfulness
3. Deut 6:1-9
 - a. Purpose of the commands –
 - b. That they may fear the Lord
 - c. That your days may be long
 - d. That it may go well with them
 - e. That they will multiply
 - f. They are to be careful
 - g. Command to love God
 - h. Teach them diligently – this word for diligent comes from the word for “tooth” or “to sharpen” [shen]
 - i. Teach them all the time
 - j. When you sit in your house
 - k. When you walk by the way
 - l. When you lie down
 - m. When you rise
 - n. Bind them as a sign on your hand (figurative language) so you will always see them
 - o. As frontlets for your eyes (figurative language) so you will always see them
 - p. Written on the doorposts of homes and gates (figurative language) so you will always see them

4. Both Passages
 - a. Involve leaving a certain culture (even fleeing) that apparently was counter to godliness based on their spiritual condition
 - b. This culture they were leaving not necessarily intentionally evil but what comes “natural” to man...lawlessness (consider Sodom), the rule of strength (not justice and righteousness). Yet their leaving did constitute a certain judgment against them and likely angered those left
 - c. The Christians stance regarding the culture of this world can and should be summed up in one word...opposition
 - d. We must create a culture in our homes of godliness...or else we die

Sermon 3—Judges 2 and 1 Samuel 3 The Faithfulness of Joshua and Eli

1. Intro
 - a. "I believe no one can read the history of our country without realizing that the Good Book and the spirit of the Savior have from the beginning been our guiding geniuses ... Whether we look to the first Charter of Virginia ... or to the Charter of New England ... or to the Charter of Massachusetts Bay ... or to the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut ... the same objective is present ... a Christian land governed by Christian principles. I believe the entire Bill of Rights came into being because of the knowledge our forefathers had of the Bible and their belief in it: freedom of belief, of expression, of assembly, of petition, the dignity of the individual, the sanctity of the home, equal justice under law, and the reservation of powers to the people ... I like to believe we are living today in the spirit of the Christian religion. I like also to believe that as long as we do so, no great harm can come to our country." -- [Liberal] Supreme Court chief justice, Earl Warren
 - b. "Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." -- George Washington
 - c. "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." "We have no government armed with power capable of contending with passions unbridled by morality and religion." "Statesmen may plan and speculate for liberty, but it is religion and morality alone, which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand." -- John Adams
 - d. "Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God?" -- Thomas Jefferson
2. Judges 2:1-10
 - a. Recount Joshua – the servant of Moses for over 50 years, lead the initial conquest of the land and distribution to the 12 tribes of Israel, a very strong leader completely committed to God’s ways
 - b. Limitations even with how much the powerful and pious leader Joshua could accomplish

- i. Israel became content with the level of conquest – yet it was incomplete...they ultimately failed to conquer their own sinfulness (Judges 1:19-33 records the phrase “did not drive out...” 9 times)
 - ii. They lost interest and did not persevere, got comfortable – fighting evil in ourselves and in the world is hard, messy, demanding, requires much mental and physical energy
 - c. Joshua’s leadership was strong, effective and impacted those who outlived him who had seen the great works of the Lord
 - d. The next generation who needed to hear the works of the Lord from those who had seen the works of the Lord evidently didn’t receive the message from their forefathers or didn’t heed it
 - e. In Joshua’s days there was a godly incompleteness to the conquest (this was always considered a long term goal) and in the days that followed the description of their lack of complete success was always described in terms of sinful lack of simply persevering in the hard work (this is not necessarily a work-ethic problem but a serious priority problem – committing ourselves to God and his ways requires us to trust him to grant greater efficiency of time and work to other areas)
 - f. Not only did this people spoken of in the opening chapters of Judges abandon God but they served the gods of the inhabitants of the land they failed to drive out
- 3. 1 Samuel 3:10-18
 - a. After the Judges we see Eli in the position of prophet, priest, and judge – doubtless he had much success but ultimately his family rejected because they did not honor God
 - b. Considered themselves above the law of God (a very common problem among leaders who define leadership primarily by one word – privilege)
 - c. All along the children of Israel have affirmed that a means of entering into the promises of God is there obedience to his commands...this is not works righteousness
 - d. Samuel comes into leadership (3:13) as Eli’s sons declared unfit (2:12, 2:22, 2:29)
 - e. More than rebuke was necessary... he needed to restrain his sons (he was judge) by at least removing them from their positions
 - f. 3:13 – Eli is a great loser in this sin and bears perhaps the greatest loss in the cutting off of his family – an indication of how much responsibility God sees him as bearing in it
 - i. We must be careful here...children bear the responsibility of their own sins...and Eli’s sons are killed as a result of battle that was prophesied as judgment from God...but we cannot miss that God lays much of this blame at Eli’s feet (and at Samuel’s feet, David’s...)
 - ii. We see this same indulgence as mentioned in Samuel in Ch. 8
 - 1. Discontent and restless in light of what they saw in their own nation compared to those around them they demand a king “like all the nations” a death knell to Israel

4. Except for Joshua, these men failed to create a lasting, durable culture of godliness. Their sons, who were to succeed them failed to honor God (how hard is it to persevere?)
5. This lack led to a rejection of God's leadership (1 Sam 8)
6. A most remarkable thing is that God holds fathers accountable and strikes at the very heart of what they should live for - if we live for the moment we will not value the future as we ought and will thus slight the future as a great priority (especially the investment in those that follow whether they are our own children or someone else's)
7. The central theme in the book of Judges is repeated in 17:6 and 21:25 – “there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes”
 - a. One would immediately think to the glorious future of David and Solomon's reign but before the monarchy God was Israel's king and they followed him
 - b. God does not authorize us to do whatever we want – yet this is what we do
 - c. We often have the impression that we'll do whatever works...this is not authorized by God
 - d. Explains why we must be in a continual process of adding his principles to our minds

Sermon 4—Luke 12:35-14 **Servants Waiting for their Lord**

1. Introduction – Hugh O'Flaherty (1898-1963) – prepared, unexpected, did his Father's business
 - a. He was a skilled diplomat and served the Vatican in Egypt, Haiti, San Domingo and Czechoslovakia. After a period of 4 years he was recalled to Rome and was appointed to the Holy Office.
 - b. By the end of the war he had helped over 6,500 Jews, American and British Soldiers escape from the Germans and his activities earned him the nickname “*Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican*” as he became the master of disguises, evading capture from the Germans when he had to leave the security of the Vatican to go on his rescue missions.
 - c. Hugh O'Flaherty regularly visited his old nemesis (the former SS chief in Rome, Colonel Herbert Kappler) in prison, month after month, being Kappler's only visitor.
2. Intro to Parables – an iceberg to the “unsinkable”
3. Be ready – spiritual readiness – vv. 35-36
 - a. Declared by the prophets, John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ – you must be born again
 - b. The new life – sets us on a new course for life – a life of learning about the character of God, His creation, ourselves, and our life purpose
 - c. A process to become ever more useful for God's great purposes
4. Why mystery of Christ's return?
 - a. To test our will
 - b. Keep us sharp and attentive – fitting us for battles until His return

- c. Waiting is giving honor – Christ is infinitely honorable
 - i. How do you wait?
 - ii. What do you do while you wait?
- 5. The blessing of being ready
 - a. First unexpected event – the Master becomes a servant
 - b. Being ready prepares the servants not only for the Master but for the thief – wanting to steal, kill, and destroy
 - i. We have an enemy if we are of God and don't think he isn't working energetically for your ruin
 - c. Being ready is the only way to be blessed by the Master
 - i. Being ready is the only way one will be saved
- 6. The wicked servant
 - a. Completely underestimated the Master's knowledge and power and his own wickedness
 - b. Presumed to do what he wanted with what wasn't his
 - i. Himself (he was a servant)
 - ii. His Master's things
 - c. Second unexpected event – the destruction of the wicked servant (is this not too harsh?) [no]
- 7. The ignorant servant
 - a. Our ignorance of the things of God is never completely faultless
 - b. He was punished (and not blessed)

Sermon 5—Matthew 13:1-23
The Sower and the Soils

- 1. Intro
- 2. Purpose of parables:
 - a. Further reveal the truth to those who accepted the mysterious
 - b. To conceal the truth from those who rejected the obvious
- 3. The 4 seed types each have a condition and the consequences that follow
- 4. Seed along the path
 - c. This is the person who doesn't understand the word of the kingdom that he hears
 - i. Does he think that he does understand
 - ii. Does he realize that he doesn't understand and then not seek answers because:
 - 1. he gets busy
 - 2. he forgets
 - 3. he doesn't consider it worth his time to dig into the things of God
 - 4. He puts it off for a tomorrow that never comes
 - d. What he has heard is snatched away by the devil

5. Seed on the rocky ground
 - e. This is the person who hears the word and *immediately* receives it with joy
 - f. But because he has no root *in himself*, he can endure only for a while
 - i. When persecution or difficulty comes *on account of* the word, he *immediately* falls away
 1. The difficulty doesn't necessarily come immediately but when it comes – the falling follows immediately
 - g. None have roots *in themselves*
 - h. As in the first case, this one quit before he reached the point of redemption, why:
 - i. He presumptuously figured he could nurture these beginnings of faith without a root - continued faithfulness to church, vibrant reading of God's word, prayer, fellowship, spiritual growth
 - ii. He underestimated the difficulties one can encounter *because of faith*
 - iii. Since his faith was only temporary, he considered it unable to help him in difficulty and thus considers all faith suspect, weak, and fake
6. Seed among the thorns
 - i. This one *hears* the word
 - j. The cares of the world (anxiety, worldliness) and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word – nothing grows more quickly than that which isn't wanted – Illus – weeds outrunning Bermuda grass because it comes out of dormancy late.
 - i. Underestimated the impact of dallying with the world
 - ii. Did not trust Christ with their difficulties (thus became anxious)
 - iii. Drawn away from the things of God by that which is temporal
 - iv. Preoccupation with the world has no room for calm and earnest meditation on the word of the Lord
 - k. It proves unfruitful (not true faith)
7. Sown on good soil
 - l. Hears the word and understands it
 - m. Bears fruit
 - i. What's difference between understanding and not understanding?
8. Application
 - n. Preachers are like farmers who plant seeds
 - o. Sowing and a later time fruit bearing presuppose a time consuming process of development with reference to the kingdom
 - p. There are various ways of hearing the word without benefit – the difference in the spiritual aspects of each soil type can be described in the single area of understanding
 - i. We can listen to the word as in the *hard way* – careless, thoughtless, and unconcerned. Christ crucified may be passionately set before us and we may be completely unaffected
 - ii. We may listen with pleasure, while the impression is only temporary – our hearts like the stony ground may yield a plentiful crop of warm feelings and good resolutions – with no deeply rooted work having been accomplished – the mere love of sermons is no sign of grace

- iii. We may listen to a sermon and get no good from it, while approving of every word it contains, because of the absorbing influence of the world – our hearts are choked like the thorny ground with cares, pleasures, and worldly plans
- q. There is only one evidence of hearing the word rightly – bearing the fruit of repentance toward God, faith in Christ, holiness of life, prayerfulness, humility
 - i. John 15:16 – “I have chosen you...that you may bring forth fruit” – the singular purpose of redemption! You won’t be redeemed to do something else!

Sermon 6—Matthew 18:23-35 **The Unmerciful Servant**

1. Intro – the theory of evolution is an excellent example of this one who pleads for patience...patience so he can nullify what is really needed – the grace of God. The evolutionist says that if only he is given more time - billions and billions of years – then the earth can produce itself – no God needed!
 - a. He holds firmly to the idea that with a little more darkness, a little more chaos, a little more nothingness, all with a little more time – then we can get the world and all it contains
2. The Kingdom of Heaven *compared* to a king who wished to settle *his accounts*
 - a. Kings have complete authority over their servants and their debts – not only debts owed directly to them but debts owed to others in the kingdom
 - i. Don’t think that a matter between you and another person does not involve God even to the point of God having authority over the situation
 - b. The King’s servants are *brought* to him and the unforgiving servant *found* the one owing him money
 - i. The Bible indicates that we will all be brought before God and that our accounts will be settled
3. The unforgiving servant pleaded for *patience* in dealing with his unthinkable large debt (200,000 years wages for a laborer)
 - a. This servant was *brought* to the king so he had already evidently run out the terms of his credit agreement, he had already exhausted the king’s patience – he really needed something more than the king’s patience
 - b. He needed far more than time to pay back the incredible debt, in fact there is no way he could pay the debt back
 - i. Asking for mere patience says to God; “God, I don’t need you, what I really need in this situation is a lot more of me!” - I need more days to go by, more financial demands, more chaos...then I could pay you back
 - ii. The king doubtless knew this and knew the one way for the debt to be made good – forgiveness – which doesn’t mean the debt is wiped out – it means that someone else, in this case the king, covered it - this was very costly for the king
4. Only the 1st creditor could give what was needed – *grace*. Even more was needed than *mercy* which is the withholding of just punishment. Not only was punishment

withheld (he wasn't thrown in prison) but the debt was forgiven.

5. The 2nd creditor, the unforgiving servant, knew that more than patience was needed (the one who owed him had also evidently run out the terms of the agreement) and his debtor was really asking for indulgence, the same as he had asked. (Indulgence is when patience becomes sinful allowance)
 - a. The 2nd creditor couldn't offer forgiveness because he didn't have it to give (obvious from the way he dealt with his debtor)
6. The big issue in the kingdom is dealing with debt
 - a. The big debt is that of sin
 - b. It can only be dealt with by way of forgiveness
 - c. Forgiveness isn't free – someone pays - but the debtor can't pay – not because unwilling but because unable
7. Those who are redeemed will be forgiving
 - a. They will be willing and able to forgive others
 - b. Redemption changes us and gives us the ability to forgive others
 - c. Those who are unforgiving are missing a key part of redemption – forgiveness - indicate that they haven't been forgiven (or redeemed)
 - d. Bottomless well of forgiveness
8. Forgiveness is a transaction
 - a. Requires repentance and then the granting of forgiveness – which is an agreement never to bring up the issue again and not allow it to impact the relationship
 - b. Not unilateral (can't really be done in the absence of repentance) but we can have a forgiving spirit and be always ready to forgive
9. Forgiveness not incompatible with justice
 - a. Billy Budd Sailor by Herman Melville
 - i. Master-at-arms Claggart
 - ii. Captain Vere
 - iii. Billy Budd – stutters and becomes speechless at accusation – only way to express dismay is physically – slugs Claggart after he accuses him of mutiny
 - iv. As he is hung at the yard arm he softly proclaims, “God bless Captain Vere”
 - b. God – totally just, free grace but not cheap grace, only through the substitutionary work of Christ

Sermon 7—Luke 10:30-37 **The Good Samaritan**

1. Introduction – George Washington's (1732-1799) motto, “deeds not words”
 - a. Virginia farmer, surveyor
 - b. Intertwined two interests – the military and westward expansion
 - c. Commissioned a LtCol in 1754, fought the first skirmishes of the French and Indian War

- d. His long, faithful service and impeccable character made him the choice as the nation's first president and shaped the office
 - e. Could have easily been a monarch, but urged a servant role as elected official
2. The lawyer talks to Jesus and has a question, but look at the spirit of the question, "put him to the test."
 - a. Jesus was likely teaching the public and before he left, the man rises and asks the question – an attempt to embarrass Jesus before the crowds
 - b. This is a question we should all put to ourselves: "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"
 - i. Inherit
 1. mine to lose – or -
 2. Someone must die for me to receive benefit
 - c. Jesus doesn't direct him to some supposed wisemen or to the Jewish church
 - d. He is directed to the Word of God – Jesus is not teaching a new doctrine
 - e. Wrong emphasis: "not what shall I do", but "what must be done"
 3. The answer - Jesus places a very high premium on duty and should lead all of us to recognize our need for Christ's substitutionary work in his perfect life and atoning death
 - a. Love God
 - b. Love neighbor
 - c. Even the best of people are powerless to perfectly obey the law – yet this is required
 - d. The parable gets at another true mark of redemption – not that which redeems us
 4. Another question is asked after the man is directed to God's Word – "who is my neighbor?"
 - a. The story indicates his real question is "who is eligible to receive my neighborliness"
 - b. The questioner knows he has not "arrived" and is looking for a loophole, since the law apparently gives no specifics on love to neighbor (common ideas were: "love your neighbor, the Israelite" or "love your neighbor, the Pharisee")
 - c. The answer Jesus gives addresses a different question, but answers all 3 – Jesus answers the question: "how am I to be a neighbor to those the Lord puts in my path?"
 5. Examples are given of non-neighborly activity and of neighborly activity
 - a. Both men, from office and profession should have been willing to help
 - b. What are some reasons you have used to justify yourself in not helping others?
 6. Parable teaches how rare and true brotherly love is

Sermon 8—Luke 14:15-24 The Great Supper

1. Intro –
 - a. Cambuslang - people known for ungodliness were transformed into godly churchmen – upwards of 50,000 gathered for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper
 - b. M'Culloch lists the ministers who assisted as Whitefield, Webster from Edinburgh, MacLauren and Gillies from Glasgow, Robe from Kilsyth, Currie from Kinglassie, M'Kneight from Irvine, Bonar from Torphichen, Hamilton from Douglas, Henderson from Blantyre, Maxwell from Rutherglen, Adam from Cathcart. What a communion! Worship began at 8:30am, on Sunday morning, and the last table was being served at sunset. Whitefield preached to the people in the churchyard at 10 o'clock that night. It was noticed by people who were there, that when the great evangelist was serving the tables, he appeared to be almost carried away in an ecstasy.
2. The principle of hospitality – not a commandment to never invite those who could also invite you to a banquet
3. Have I accepted the invitation to this house of feasting?
4. The custom of a double invitation was not uncommon among the Jews, some would not go to an event unless they had been invited twice
5. Excuses
 - a. Don't overlook that they had already promised to come
 - i. Surely the field wasn't bought sight unseen – think of a magnificent pasture and field, well watered and prepared to receive seed, consider the beautiful produce and what it would yield to its owner
 - ii. Surely the oxen were excellent animals or he wouldn't have paid for them – must he try them now? Think of the revenue and prestige of owning such grand and powerful animals
 - iii. A feast is a great thing to bring a new wife to
 - b. The excuses were pathetic
 - i. Body above soul
 - ii. Temporal above eternity
 - iii. Pretended inability is in fact unwillingness
 - c. Breath-taking undervaluing of the feast
 - d. The activities themselves were not sinful– but this is a parable of the Kingdom of God
6. Master is (rightly) angry at being rejected
7. The blind, cripple, poor, and lame must be brought (not merely invited) perhaps because they would question whether a sumptuous banquet was really for them
8. Master – big hearted and generous – he wants the banquet hall filled
9. “None of those invited shall taste of my dinner”

- a. The central lesson – refusing to accept God’s gracious invitation of salvation by grace through faith will result in being excluded from the blessings and joys of the new heavens and the new earth
- b. There is no other way to enjoy a relationship with the banquet giver – you must come to the feast
- c. Christ keeps a good house and an open house

Sermon 9—Luke 15:11-32
The Prodigal Son

1. Introduction - Among the worse things to lose – When the opposing force “loses” an army bent on attacking them – when the Federal forces “lost” General Jackson’s army – they paid dearly when he was “found” again
2. Parable - An object lesson about true repentance – Charles Dickens called it the greatest short story ever written
 - a. Some of the real power in this parable comes from the way it runs so counter to the hearers’ (wrong) understanding of God and His purpose in redemption
 - b. Thought of themselves as profound biblical scholars but Jesus routinely denounced their ignorance and misunderstanding of the scriptures
 - c. Again – vital to see this parable from the view of first century Judaism – to them the idea that God would freely accept and forgive sinners was a shocking concept
 - d. Today’s culture generally is in the opposite extreme – most today take God’s forgiveness for granted – never consider the cost...to God
3. His shameless demand
 - a. 3 Main characters – focus begins with the younger brother, then to the father, then to the older brother. Initially the younger brother is exposed as a scoundrel, but later the oldest is shown to be the real villain
 - b. “Father give me the share of the estate that falls to me”
 - i. Outrageous, grossly dishonoring to the father – to the extreme
 - ii. He wanted nothing to do with being a part of the ongoing management of the estate
 - iii. He didn’t want his father’s advice, leadership, companionship
4. The Father’s surprising response
 - a. Nothing he could do to cover the boy’s shame, besides publicly disowning him.
 - b. The father’s actions indicate his deep devotion to his son as he was willing to put up with the public humiliation rather than disown his son – Jesus was explaining his own love for sinners
 - c. Dishonor was nothing to Christ who stepped out of heaven and left His rightful throne to make Himself of no reputation
5. His shameful misconduct
 - a. Complete meltdown of the Prodigal’s life
 - b. Lusts prove uncontrollable
 - c. The Prodigal would have to sell his birthright garage-sale fashion, pennies on the dollar

- d. Where is the older brother in all of this? Where are the entreaties to do the right thing, the brotherly leadership and love
 - e. Riotous living, made “friends”
 - f. Pursued by Providence – right after the money ran out, there was a severe famine in the land
 - g. Finds himself in a hopeless situation
6. His turning point
- a. Scheme to avoid repentance
 - i. What lots of people do before they really hit rock bottom – attempt some last ditch effort to avoid owning up to all the wrong they have done
 - ii. “Joined himself to a citizen”
 - b. Feeding the pigs
 - i. Virtually the lowest possible chore in the labor pecking order
 - ii. The nature of the job alone was enough to seal the Prodigal son’s status as a permanent unredeemable outcast of Jewish society
 - iii. The job offer was probably more of an insult than an act of compassion
 - c. A living symbol of every sinner
 - i. All sin involves this kind of irrational rebellion against a loving heavenly Father
 - ii. The Prodigal son is not a picture of the worst sinner but every unredeemed sinner
 - iii. The evil motives that drove the Prodigal are the natural tendencies of every human heart
 - iv. So we are all Prodigal sons and daughters
7. His return
- a. His intent – make a full confession – never figured on being back in the family
 - b. He would die soon if nothing was done
 - c. True repentance – begins with a true assessment of a person’s situation
 - d. Sees everything in a fresh new light
 - i. As a materialistic youth he never realized how well his father treated hired servants
 - ii. Perhaps the worst of his sins was the great distance he placed between himself and his father
8. The father
- a. The Scribes and Pharisees expected the hammer to fall when the son returned – the son’s entire future now was completely dependant on the father’s mercy
 - b. The father took off in a full sprint in order to be the first person to reach him to deflect the abuse he knew the boy would suffer
9. The older brother
- a. The scribes and Pharisees cheer him on, finally someone with some sense and backbone in this family
 - b. Guilty of sinister sin but more passive – his actions prove his rebellion

- c. A perfect symbol of the Pharisees – absolutely no appreciation for the father’s grace because he thought he didn’t need it
- d. He angrily stands outside of the celebration and is forced to realize he has excluded himself
- e. The Pharisees chief error was that they believed they deserved God’s grace

Sermon 10—Matthew 25:14-30
The Parable of the Talents

1. Intro - The master was rich and wise – he knew his servants well and understood they had different abilities
 - a. Christ keeps no servants to be idle
 - b. Our privileges in Christ are for the express purpose of business in the kingdom
 - c. ILLUS: - in A Christmas Carol – When Scrooge is talking to Jacob Marley’s ghost he says, concerning the torment he now endures because of his godless life , “But you were always a good man of business, Jacob” “Business!” cried the ghost, wringing its hands again. “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business.”
2. 3rd servant didn’t care to be bothered with the task assigned
 - a. Not timidity
 - b. Not a feeling of inferiority because he received less
 - c. It was unjustified suspicion and laziness
 - d. Did he think the master would never return?
3. 3rd attempted to cover his laziness by accusing the master of being hard
 - a. Like the master was asking him to make bricks with no straw
 - b. He is simply lying about the master
 - c. Adam did the same thing, “this woman you have given me”
 - d. If the master was so hard, the master follows the faulty reasoning and indicates that he should have been the more eager to be productive
 - e. He acts as if the master should give him credit for having been so cautious and returning the talent
 - f. God is far from being a hard master, the earth is full of His goodness
 - g. Slothful professors are afraid of doing too much for God
 - h. Parable reveals that he is an intruder, proven by his actions
 - i. He ends up in a place where he’ll have no opportunity to work for the master
4. Why the 1st and 2nd did better
 - a. Prompted by the masters command
 - b. Encouraged by the master’s confidence in them
 - c. Anticipatory of the consequential account they must give one day
 - d. We are to set about quickly and not lose time in our work for Christ
 - e. The 3rd squandered one talent, imagine what it will be like for those who squander 2 or 5

- f. God honors those who honor him
 - g. ILLUS – Eric Liddell –
 - i. Interned at Weihsien Camp, in China, [he was a missionary] during World War II, died of a brain tumor, 21 Feb, 1945, he was 43 years old
 - ii. 47.6 seconds to win the 400 meter race
 - iii. 1924 Olympics, Paris, one of his masseurs, wrote a note to him before the final 400 meter race, “In the old book it says, ‘He that honors me I will honor.’” [1 Sam 2:30]
5. We see the joy of the servants as they say, “behold” or “here” is your two more or five more talents
6. Application from Hedriksen and Kistemaker
- a. Whatever we have, whether opportunities or ability to use them to advantage, belongs to God. We possess. God owns. What we have is still “his property.” We are stewards.
 - b. The Lord grants us opportunities for service in accordance with our ability to make use of them. Accordingly, since not all men have the same ability, therefore not all have the same, or an equal number of, opportunities. In the day of judgment the number (of opportunities for service, “talents”) will not matter. The question is only, “Have we been faithful in their use?” [Doctrine of vocation comes into play here]
 - c. Not only committing murder, adultery, theft, etc. is wrong, but so is also omitting good deeds to the glory of God.
 - d. Jesus did not expect to return immediately. He knew that a relatively long time would elapse before his return.
 - e. Everything should be done with a view to the day of reckoning that is coming. “How will this wish, thought, word, or deed, look on the day of the final judgment?” is the question that should constantly be asked.
 - f. Though, in the light of their meaning for eternity, our responsibilities here and now are very important, they will be surpassed by those in hereafter.
 - g. To share the Master’s own joy and the joy of all the saved is the glory of the life hereafter.
 - h. Instead of being true to his trust, a wicked and lazy person will offer excuses.

Sermon 11—Genesis 39-50
The Life of Joseph, the Ultimate
Fire and Forget Weapon

- 1. Intro - Tullibee and Tang in WWII, sank by their own torpedoes, anti-circular run, now use depth separation (not always a fire and forget weapon!)
- 2. Lived from around 1700BC to 1600 BC, Israelites in Egypt from 1664 BC to 1448
- 3. Difficult beginnings (v. 1)
 - a. Openly and inequitably loved most among the children by his father, Joseph was understandably hated by his brothers
 - i. Robe with many colors (37:3)

- ii. Probably not the smoothest way to discuss dreams
 - iii. May have taken undue advantage of father's love and been callous to other children's impression of favoritism
 - b. Sold as a slave by his brothers – places the seed of Christ in very vulnerable position (Jacob and family languish in famine stricken Israel and the one to rescue them nearly killed by their own hands)
 - c. God's chosen way of deliverance laden with danger and the necessity to trust
 - d. Joseph ends up in the house of a very powerful man in Egypt, Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard
 - e. The Lord was with Joseph, and he was very successful
4. Man of integrity (vv. 2-5)
- a. God caused him to succeed - before Joseph came to Potiphar's house things were evidently not so well
 - b. Found favor in Potiphar's eyes
 - c. Faithful and hard worker
5. Resisted temptation (6-19)
- a. Refused to take undue advantage of position
 - b. The penalty for attempted adultery was 1000 strikes with a whip – Joseph likely spared this because Potiphar questioned his wife's integrity. Egyptian women were known for their lack of chastity
 - c. The sin began where most do – with the eye
 - i. Joseph like his mother – (Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance Gen 29:17)
 - d. Tried to turn him into a criminal and when she failed represented him as one
 - e. His father deceived by his robe and now his master was
6. Wrongly accused, still enjoying God's favor (vv. 20-23)
- a. Though the innocent one in the situation, sent to prison
 - b. Made leader of prison through honest, hard work coupled with the blessing of God
 - c. A good man will do good wherever he is
 - d. Whatever he did the Lord made it succeed
7. Ultimately, placed in charge of the entire country under Pharaoh
- a. 2nd to Potiphar
 - b. 2nd to jailer
 - c. 2nd to Pharaoh ('father to Pharaoh' 45:8)
 - d. 30 years old when he took his final position
 - i. 17 when sold as a slave
 - ii. 13 years as a slave
 - iii. 3 years of this in prison
8. Lessons
- a. Genesis 50:20 – As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

- i. Much “evil” did come from there wicked act – but God, through pre-planned providence used it all as a means to accomplish the great task of preservation for the Israelites
 - ii. Acts 2:23 this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.
- b. The means of our faithfulness to God as a primary method to accomplish God’s assigned tasks in our lives
 - i. Paul – calling to preach the gospel
 - ii. Devoted mothers and fathers – calling to raise up godly children
 - iii. Often not looked upon by society and their friends and family as “worth it” or “necessary” – not always commended even by the worldly church

Sermon 12—Judges 13-16
The Life of Samson, the
Disadvantages of Strength

1. Intro - How we make strength a disadvantage:
2. Heap to ourselves a boldness and courage to do things we shouldn’t do (and leave the things we have been given strength to do undone)
 - a. 14:1-2 - Consider that we are above the law... that because of our strength, our position, our brains, our ability to contribute greatness to society, etc. we are not held to the same standards as others. Also we have the idea that we are immune from the consequences of disobeying God or that we are so powerful that we will not be negatively impacted enough by sin to make a difference to our reputation and strength. We have the idea that we can play with sin because we are in control.
 - b. 14:3,8-9 - Our boldness and power inhibits those who would be our counselors and we blow them off anyway...because our strength makes us think we know better
 - c. 14:3-4
3. 16:5-6 - We rely so much on our strengths that we open ourselves up to incredible blind spots (Delilah does work for the enemy, you know)
4. 16:15-17 - Our blindspots and boldness give us the impression that we are unstoppable and we are weak at the very point in which we should be strong (he allows this woman to annoy him to death...) He killed a lion, 1000 men with a jawbone of a donkey but couldn’t control his own lusts
5. We don’t often consider our own use of the strength God gives us as reckless and selfish uses for our own purposes, for the most part inconsiderate of a greater purpose. Here with Samson even the uncritical observer can find that his exhibitions of God-given strength while clearly included in God’s plan to push back those who were in opposition to God’s people, were approached not as Joshua trustingly led the children of Israel to victory, but as a man seeking revenge for personal reasons.
6. A type of Christ - the Spirit of the Lord enabled him to perform feats of strength

(consider also David, another type of Christ who killed a lion, bear, Goliath)

7. Application

- a. Implications of our own selfishness and imperfections concerning strength, disgust with ourselves and poor stewardship of God's strength
- b. Realization of our great need and inability, even with great strength to accomplish even one untainted goal – the design of this realization is not to despair but to run to Christ
- c. Samson was only one in a long line of leaders in Israel at this point, next we would move on to a short list of leaders in the prophet-priest category that also ultimately failed and gave the children of Israel a nagging desire to have a king to lead them, thus rejecting God as their leader.
- d. This long list of leaders and judges and priests and prophets and kings, some better than others, surely some in the category of faithful yet imperfect, was by design to lead God's people to an absolute desperate desire for the One, true, faithful prophet priest and king, this one who would lead perfectly and be able to rescue them not only from their personal crises of the need for righteousness before God but from their national crises of the need of a deliverer.
- e. We tend to have similarities in our approaches to things. If we are convinced of personal power we expect that we can approach God with this power and strength. We often have the idea that we can contribute to our salvation, to our coming to God.
- f. This is a bloodless salvation, just as Samson was a type of Christ, so the sin offerings were also. Every one of the sin offerings was a bloody offering and there was no part of the priest on the altar!

APPENDIX 5

HOME WORSHIP HELPS

Home Worship Help 1

Catechism Questions:

Q. 63. Which is the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment is, Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God gives you.

Q. 64. What is required in the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment requires the preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to everyone in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals.

Q. 65. What is forbidden in the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment forbids the neglecting of, or doing anything against, the honor and duty which belongs to everyone in their several places and relations.

Family Prayer:

Be Thou My Vision

Author unknown

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art.
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my battle Shield, Sword for the fight;
Be Thou my Dignity, Thou my Delight;
Thou my soul's Shelter, Thou my high Tower:
Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

Ephesians 5 and 6

1. What is the passage from Ephesians 5:22-6:4 about?
2. Which members of the family are addressed?
3. What are some of the key words that describe the way wives should respond to their husbands?
4. What are some of the key words that describe the way husbands should respond to their wives?
5. How is the husband like a relay runner or the steward of a precious item?
6. In what way is a wife to submit to her husband?
7. In what ways are husbands to love their wives?
8. How does Christ love the church? How did He show His love for the church?
9. Why should children honor and obey their parents?
10. What are some ways that children can honor their parents?
11. What does Paul say specifically to fathers concerning raising children?
12. Why does Paul specifically address this concern in the context of leading children?
13. How can parents instruct and correct without making children angry?

Verses:

Ephesians 6:1 – Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right.

Ephesians 6:4 - Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

World Prayer: (from *Operation World*)

Netherlands

Area: 41,785 sq km, Northwestern Europe occupying the Rhine delta; over 20% is below sea level.
Population: 16,653,346 Annual Growth: 0.41%
Capital: Amsterdam (administrative capital); The Hague (seat of government)
Largest Religion: Non-religious
Evangelical: 4.3% (716,000)

Challenges for Prayer

Christianity in the Netherlands seems to have hit rock bottom. Less than 20% attend church with any regularity – the lowest figure in centuries. Possibly 65% of Dutch claim no affiliation with a church. Half of the nation's church buildings have been destroyed or converted for other purposes, such as bars and mosques. The Church has effectively withdrawn from engaging society in the public sphere. But many think that hedonism and secular materialism's emptiness are becoming apparent, and that church decline is slowing and even reversing. Pray for this opportunity to be seized by astute believers to regain momentum for church growth and spread the leaven of the Kingdom.

Home Worship Help 2

Catechism Questions:

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

Q. 2. What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

A. The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

Q. 3. What do the Scriptures principally teach?

A. The Scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.

Family Prayer:

In Christ Alone

In Christ alone my hope is found;
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all—
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save.
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied;
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid—
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious day,
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory,
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
For I am His and He is mine—
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home—
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.

Genesis 18:1-21

1. What was to be the result of Abraham's greatness and blessing?
2. What was Abraham's task in life, or why was Abraham chosen by God?
3. Must Abraham do something or enter into some sort of activity to receive the blessing from God?
4. What is the connection between Abraham's calling and what happens to Sodom and Gomorrah?

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

1. What is to be continually on our hearts?
2. Why is this important?
3. Can we have a long and fulfilling life without obeying God?
4. When are the things of God to be taught?
5. How are the things of God to be taught?
6. What is the significance of binding the things of God as a sign on our hand or frontlets between our eyes?
7. What is the significance of placing the Word of God on our doorposts and gates?

Verses:

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 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.

World Prayer: (from *Operation World*)

Myanmar

Basin and delta of the Irrawaddy River ringed by a horseshoe of high mountains that isolates the country from India, China and Thailand.

Population: 50,495,672

Capital: Naypyidaw

Official language: Burmese Languages: 116

Largest Religion: Buddhist

Answer to Prayer

The continued growth of the church amid great suffering and repression is an answer to prayer. While the majority of believers still come from certain ethnic minorities, there is an increasing response from the Buddhist majority, particularly monks. Momentum in evangelism is building as an indigenous missions movement begins to flourish.

Challenge for Prayer

The military junta has redefined the term "ruthless". Their self-serving policies of isolation impoverished an otherwise wealthy land and made it an international pariah. The violent crackdown on protests led by Buddhist monks in 2007 drove a wedge between those who control power and those who hold moral authority in this deeply spiritual nation. The population is increasingly disillusioned with the regime to the point of being openly critical. UN resolutions addressing the junta's actions were blocked by China and Russia, and ASEAN's influence is negligible. Pray for intervention that will bring justice; pray also for repentance of those who use their power in wicked ways.

Home Worship Help 3

Catechism Questions:

Q. 4. What is God?

A. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Q. 5. Are there more Gods than one?

A. There is but one only, the living and true God.

Q. 6. How many persons are there in the Godhead?

A. There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

Family Prayer:

Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee.
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shall be.
Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought or hoped or known.
Yet how rich is my condition!
God and heaven are still my own.

Let the world despise and leave me,
They have left my Savior, too.
Human hearts and looks deceive me;
Thou art not, like them, untrue.
O while Thou dost smile upon me,
God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate and friends disown me,
Show Thy face and all is bright.

Man may trouble and distress me,
'Twill but drive me to Thy breast.
Life with trials hard may press me;
Heaven will bring me sweeter rest.
Oh, 'tis not in grief to harm me
While Thy love is left to me;
Oh, 'twere not in joy to charm me,
Were that joy unmixed with Thee.

Go, then, earthly fame and treasure,
Come disaster, scorn and pain
In Thy service, pain is pleasure,
With Thy favor, loss is gain
I have called Thee Abba Father,
I have stayed my heart on Thee
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather;
All must work for good to me.

Soul, then know thy full salvation
Rise o'er sin and fear and care
Joy to find in every station,
Something still to do or bear.
Think what Spirit dwells within thee,
Think what Father's smiles are thine,
Think that Jesus died to win thee,
Child of heaven, canst thou repine.

Haste thee on from grace to glory,
Armed by faith, and winged by prayer.
Heaven's eternal days before thee,
God's own hand shall guide us there.
Soon shall close thy earthly mission,
Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days,
Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.

Judges 2:1-10

1. Was the Lord disappointed with Israel?
2. What had Israel done to disobey God?
3. What was to be the result of Israel's disobedience?
4. How did the people respond to this result?
5. What kind of an impact did Joshua's leadership have on Israel?
6. What happened after he was no longer leading them?
7. What urgent task did the families of Israel fail to do?

1 Samuel 3:1-21

1. What did God tell Samuel concerning Eli's future?
2. What reason did God give for bringing this upon Eli?
3. How did Eli respond to the news Samuel told him from the Lord?

Verse:

Judges 2:10 – And all that generation were also gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.

World Prayer: (from *Operation World*)

Nigeria

Population: 158,258,917

Capital: Abuja

Official language: English. Hausa is widely used in the north and middle belt, Yoruba in the southwest, Igbo in the southeast and Pidgin English all over the south Languages: 521

Largest Religion: Christian (30% of population are Evangelical Christians)

Answer to Prayer

The successful transition from one civilian government to another is a first for Nigeria. Attempts to strengthen the national banks and economy and to combat corruption have met with some success. The promise of further development assistance for the aggrieved oil-rich states has also helped establish a measure of peace. Praise God that despite many threats, Nigeria's national stability seems to be consolidating.

Challenge for Prayer

Nigeria's unity has survived, almost miraculously, despite countless threats. The cumulative effects of ancient tribal rivalries, Muslim conquests, British colonial policy in which the north and south were handled differently, the bitter Biafra war of 1967-70 and heightened religious tensions have left deep scars. Pray for healing and reconciliation; pray also for leadership that will serve to reconcile and unite rather than to embitter and divide.

Home Worship Help 4

Catechism Questions:

Q. 39. What is the duty which God require of man?

A. The duty which God requires of man, is obedience to his revealed will.

Q. 40. What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience?

A. The rule which God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the moral law.

Q. 41. Wherein is the moral law summarily comprehended?

A. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments.

Family Prayer:

Amazing Grace

John Newton

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear.
And Grace, my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'Tis Grace that brought me safe thus far
and Grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me.
His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

When we've been here ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun.

Luke 12:35-40

1. For what purpose are the servants to remain dressed for work and keep their lamps lit?
2. What was involved in keeping an oil lamp lit during the first century AD?
3. In how many ways can people wait for someone (impatiently, devotedly, etc.)?
4. Can we wait on God the way servants wait for or on a master?
5. What sorts of things can we do while we wait (waste time, nothing, be about the master's business, etc.)? Are these things normally expected by a master?
7. In the parable, what happens to the servant who knew master's will but didn't do it?
8. Are you angered when you hear of the beaten servant? Why?
9. Why does Jesus come at an unexpected hour?
10. What is meant by the phrase "much is given." Have you been given much?
11. In the next passage the Lord Jesus indicates that He has come not to bring peace but division. Why do you think such hard language is used?

Verse:

Luke 12:37 - Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.

World Prayer: (from *Operation World*)

Pakistan

Islamic Republic of Pakistan

796,095 sq km, which includes 83,700 sq km of UN-divided Kashmir controlled by Pakistan. Arid mountains in the north and west. Desert in the east and southeast. Vast irrigation schemes in the fertile Indus River valley.

Population: 184,753,300 Capital: Islamabad

Peoples

Peoples: 463 (97% unreached)

Religion

Largest Religion: Muslim; 1.1 Million Evangelical Christians

Answer to Prayer

Prayer movements within Pakistan – and for Pakistan from abroad – have quickly multiplied and grown. Thousands intercede for breaking events, emerging needs and long-standing challenges. A troubled land such as Pakistan surely stands in need of prayer.

Challenge for Prayer

Pakistan's government alternates between inept civilian parties crippled by infighting and corruption, and autocratic military dictatorships. Economic and social development is then hindered, while too much power and wealth lies in the hands of a few elite. The country is under stress from fundamentalist forces in Pakistan's west and neighbouring Afghanistan as well as in the Punjab. Tensions with India and long-standing troubles in Kashmir, a region driven by religious and political divisions, also threaten stability. Pray that Pakistan would be freed from spirits of lawlessness and violence that continue to bleed the nation. Pray for the raising of leaders of integrity and a government that will be effective in moving the nation forward and uplifting those who most need their protection and assistance. That Pakistan persists as a nation at all is a testament to the amazing resilience and flexibility of its people.

Home Worship Help 5

Catechism Questions:

Q. 7. What are the decrees of God?

A. The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

Q. 8. How doth God execute his decrees?

A. God executes his decrees in the works of creation and providence.

Q. 9. What is the work of creation?

A. The work of creation is, God's making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good.

Q. 10. How did God create man?

A. God created man male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.

Q. 11. What are God's works of providence?

A. God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions.

Family Prayer:

Now Thank We All Our God

Now thank we all our God,
with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom this world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us;
and keep us still in grace,
and guide us when perplexed;
and free us from all ills,
in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given;
the Son, and him who reigns
with them in highest heaven;
the one eternal God,
whom earth and heaven adore;
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

Matthew 13:1-23 – The Parable of the Sower

1. How many seed types are there in the parable?
2. How many soil types? What are they?
3. What is the purpose of parables?
4. What are your thoughts about verse 15?
5. How do we overcome dull hearts?
6. How would you know if your heart was dull?
7. What are the different heart conditions noted in the parable? (hint: note the soil types)
8. How long might it take for soil types 2 and 3 to be shown for what they are and die?
9. How many types will yield true salvation?

Verse:

Matthew 13:23 – As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundred-fold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.

World Prayer: (from *Operation World*)

India

Population: 1,214,464,312 Capital: Delhi
Peoples: 2,533 (88% unreached)

Religion

Largest Religion: Hinduism (74%); Evangelical (2%)

Answer to Prayer

The restoration of political centrism – following the election defeat of a Hinduistic government with extremist tendencies – has returned a measure of religious freedom and has overseen economic growth and the addressing of injustices inherent to the caste system.

Challenge for Prayer

Political, economic and social challenges to the country place a great burden upon India's government. Much positive progress has been made in many areas; to consolidate and build on such progress, prayer is called for. Pray for India's leaders, that they might:

- a) Continue to uphold the constitution by maintaining religious freedom and protecting religious and ethnic minorities.
- b) Uproot corruption in all levels of government – from national to state levels and right down to the local level. With 100 of the 543 members of Parliament having criminal cases pending against them in 2010, clearly the system needs transparency.
- c) Address the growing threat of Maoist/Naxalite insurgency. The stretch of rural India from Nepal down to Andhra Pradesh is known as the Red Corridor. These movements threaten stability and security, both locally and regionally. They also threaten the healthy growth of the Church through Naxalite infiltration of Christian communities and the general disruption caused by violence.

Home Worship Help 6

Catechism Questions:

Q. 12. What special act of providence did God exercise toward man in the estate wherein he was created?

A. When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death.

Q. 13. Did our first parents continue in the estate wherein they were created?

A. Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God.

Q. 14. What is sin?

A. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.

Family Prayer:

A Mighty Fortress is Our God

Martin Luther

A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper he amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
doth seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
were not the right man on our side,
the man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth, his name,
from age to age the same,
and he must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God hath willed
his truth to triumph through us.
The Prince of Darkness grim,
we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo, his doom is sure;
one little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers,
no thanks to them, abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours,
thru him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill;
God's truth abideth still;
his kingdom is forever.

Matthew 18:23-35

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

1. What is the value of a 'talent' ?
2. Why didn't the heavily indebted servant have to pay?
3. What was the servant's financial situation?
4. What did the king do concerning the servant's debt?
5. What is the value of a 'denarii'?
6. What is the difference between the way the king handled the servant's large debt and the way the servant handled the small debt of another servant?
7. Does God's mercy given to us when we are saved provide mercy for others? How much?
8. Why do you think that sometimes when we receive gifts we become selfish?
9. What impact do your actions have on others?
10. Why did the king initially forgive the debt?

Verse:

Matthew 18:21-22 - Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.

World Prayer: (from Operation World)

Singapore

Area: 699 sq km One larger and 54 smaller islands off the southern tip of Peninsular Malaysia; strategically located for communications and trade. Singapore is Asia's cleanest and greenest city.

Population: 4,836,691

Religion:

Largest Religion: Buddhist 40%; 377,000 Evangelicals (8%)

Answer to Prayer

The growth of the Church in Singapore has been steady and sustained since 1970. Evangelicals in particular increased 20-fold from 1960 to 2010; 1 out of 13 people in Singapore is now evangelical. Independent and charismatic churches represent nearly half of all new churches, and some of them now attract over 20,000 in weekly attendance. Additionally, the mainline churches such as Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians have very strong evangelical components and continue to grow.

Challenge for Prayer

Singaporean society is built on dedicated labor, discipline and self-reliance. These engender stability, good governance and a corruption-resistant culture, but also an emphasis on performance and wealth. Materialism has noticeably increased. Much of Singapore's affluence is now dependent on imported labor from poorer countries; entire sectors of the nation's economy would collapse without it. Pray for justice and fair treatment for all those from abroad; despite good legal safeguards, exploitation does exist. Pray that churches might become more active in assisting those at risk. Pray also that the admirable strengths of Singapore might not in themselves become idols.

Home Worship Help 7

Catechism Questions:

Q. 15. What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created?

A. The sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, was their eating the forbidden fruit

Q. 16. Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?

A. The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.

Q. 17. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

Family Prayer:

For All The Saints

For all the saints, who from their labors rest,
who thee by faith before the world confessed,
thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thou wast their rock, their fortress, and their might;
thou Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight;
thou in the darkness drear, their one true light.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

O may thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,
fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
and win with them the victor's crown of gold.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

O blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
yet all are one in thee, for all are thine.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
and hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Luke 10:25-37

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

1. Why do you think the lawyer asked Jesus the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"
2. What does Jesus direct him to do? Are you surprised at Jesus' answer? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think the lawyer asked the next question, "Who is my neighbor?"
4. During this period of history, Samaritans were looked down upon by Jews and one would probably expect that a priest or a Levite (of the priestly tribe) would be quick to help others. In the parable, why do you think Jesus chose a priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan to either help or not help the man?
5. Who really helps the terribly hurt man? What does he do? What does the helper have to gain? Why do you think he helped?
6. What does it take to really show love to our neighbor?

Verse:

Luke 10:36-37 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

World Prayer: (from *Operation World*)

Somalia

Area: 637,000 sq km

The mostly arid Horn of Africa east of Ethiopia and Kenya.

Population: 9,358,602 Capital: Mogadishu

Peoples: 22 (77% unreached)

Largest Religion: Muslim (99.7%); Evangelicals (0.0%)
[4,263 people]

Answer to Prayer:

An infant Somali Church is emerging amid great tribulation. Somali Christians are despised and heavily persecuted, even martyred, but are also growing in faith and in vision. Burdened for their country, they are leading more boldly and will clearly not just disappear. Those in power admit that Somalis are no longer 100% Muslim but more stridently insist that all Somalis remain Muslim.

Challenge for Prayer:

Africa's most failed state continues to struggle for stability. More than 20 years after the start of war, violence and anarchy still reign. Several attempts to restore law and order failed – the "transitional" federal government (TFG) still does not control most of the country or even most of Mogadishu. Strong clan structures have thus far undermined rather than strengthened attempts at governing the south. Al Shabaab and other fundamentalist factions control significant amounts of territory, even driving the TFG from its former stronghold. Pray that all Somalis would support the government and that its authority would be established throughout the country. Pray that future rulers might learn from the past, govern the nation for the good of the people, respect human rights and grant true religious freedom.

Home Worship Help 8

Catechism Questions:

Q. 18. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?

A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

Q. 19. What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?

A. All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

Q. 20. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?

A. God, having out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.

Family Prayer:

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Robert Robinson

Come, thou Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
mount of thy redeeming love.

Here I raise mine Ebenezer;
hither by thy help I'm come;
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;
he, to rescue me from danger,
interposed his precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, O take and seal it,
seal it for thy courts above.

Luke 14:15-24

The Parable of the Great Supper

1. What sort of banquet was being offered to the people? Why the double invitation?
2. What kind of excuses did people give for not wanting to go? Why do you think they didn't want to attend?
3. What did the excuses indicate about the people themselves?
4. How did the master respond to the pathetic excuses? Does this surprise you?
5. Did the master seem committed to having the banquet hall filled and proving for all who wanted to come?
6. In asking the unexpected and downtrodden to come, what is the master saying about himself?
7. Would you say that you have accepted God's invitation to the Great Supper?

World Prayer: (from *Operation World*)

Russia

Area: 17,075,400 sq km; the world's largest country.

Population: 140,366,561

Largest religion: Christian; 47% unreached peoples

Evangelicals: 1.2% of population

Answer to prayer:

Ambitious and faith-filled church planting vision in many current evangelical networks is a far cry from the insular survival mode of Communist-era Christianity.

Challenge for prayer:

The current religious climate of Russia is mixed, both spiritually open and closed at the same time. Orthodoxy is culturally strong yet spiritually weak in the lives of most of its followers. Millions call themselves Russian Orthodox without actually believing in God. Current gloom has not led to high degrees of spirituality, and the surge of religious activity in the 1990's has all but stalled. Cults and sects, both Eastern and Western, and belief in the paranormal are common. Pray that the Russian peoples' hearts will be hungry for and open to promptings of the Holy Spirit and the Gospel of Christ.

Home Worship Help 9

Catechism Questions:

Q. 21. Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?

A. The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man and so was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever.

Q. 22. How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?

A. Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her yet without sin.

Q. 23. What offices does Christ execute as our Redeemer?

A. Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.

Family Prayer:

How Firm A Foundation

Author Unknown

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said
Who unto the Savior for refuge have fled?

In every condition, -- in sickness, in health,
In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth,
At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea, --
The Lord, the Almighty, they strength e'er shall be.

"Fear not, I am with thee, oh, be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.

"When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;
For I will be with thee thy troubles to bless
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply.
The flames shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.

"E'en down to old age all My people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in My bosom be borne.

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
I will not, I will not, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never, forsake!"

Luke 15:11-32

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

1. How do you think the father felt when his youngest son asked for his inheritance – now?
2. Why do you think the father gave it to him?
3. Why do you think the son went to a far country?
4. What did it take for the younger son to 'come to himself'?
5. What was the father doing when the son came home?
6. How did the father respond to the son's homecoming?
7. How did the older brother respond to his brother's homecoming?
8. What did this attitude reveal about the older brother?

Verse:

Luke 15:18 - "I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.'"

World Prayer: (from *Operation World*)

Federal Republic of Germany

Population: 82,056,775 Capital: Berlin
1.7 million Evangelicals, 52 million Christians

Answer to Prayer

Expressions of grassroots spirituality are springing up around the country. House churches, youth movements, multicultural congregations, increasing Christian publications and Bible versions in German, new streams of worship and the like demonstrate there is vibrant spiritual life beyond declining organized religion. This in itself is appealing to unbelievers put off by traditional religious structures.

Challenge for Prayer

Germany's wealth, influence and strategic location in the EU and Europe could be of inestimable value for the Kingdom of God. For this, a strong, courageous leadership based on Christian values is needed – a fact recognized by many in the nation. Sadly, the past decade witnessed significant erosion of the ethical platform on which such leaders need to stand. Pray for God to raise up leaders who will hold fast to righteousness and strong moral values despite opposition and temptation to compromise.

Home Worship Help 10

Catechism Questions:

Q. 24. How does Christ execute the office of a prophet?

A. Christ executes the office of a prophet, in revealing to us, by his Word and Spirit the will of God for our salvation.

Q. 25. How does Christ execute the office of a priest?

A. Christ executes the office of a priest, in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.

Q. 26. How does Christ execute the office of a king?

A. Christ executes the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

Family Prayer:

Jesus Shall Reign

Isaac Watts

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom spread from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

Through Him shall endless prayer be made,
And praises throng to crown His head;
His name, like sweet perfume shall rise
With ev'ry morning sacrifice,
With ev'ry morning sacrifice.

People and realms of ev'ry tongue
Dwell on His love with sweetest song;
And infant voices shall proclaim
Their early blessings on His Name,
Their early blessings on His Name.

Blessings abound where'er He reigns;
The prisoner leaps to lose his chains,
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blest,
And all the sons of want are blest!

Matthew 25:14-30

The Parable of the Talents

1. How much is a 'talent' worth?
2. What did the servants do with their talents?
3. Why do you think they did that?
4. What was the master's response to the servants?
5. What sorts of gifts has God given you, such as abilities or opportunities?
6. How well would you say you have managed these gifts?
7. Do you think God is pleased with the way you have invested what He has given you?
8. How could you do better?

Verse:

Matthew 25:23 - His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

World Prayer: (from *Operation World*)

Venezuela

About 80% of the population live along the Caribbean coastal belt in the north; the centre and south are grasslands and tropical forest.

Population: 29,043,555 Capital: Caracas

Evangelicals 3,147,421

Answer to Prayer

The increasing size and influence of evangelicals. Not only is numerical growth continuing at a modest but stable rate, but evangelicals are beginning to be recognized as a legitimate expression of the Church and as key players in social and political scenes.

Challenge for Prayer

Venezuela is a volatile and divided nation. The economy is deeply dependent on the price of oil, and the political scene is polarized between the president's supporters and his detractors. Increasingly strident anti-Western posturing offsets widespread investments in social and economic programs for the poor. Pray for the wisdom to administer the nation wisely, to implement sensible policies that strengthen the nation and to strive for peace domestically and abroad.

Home Worship Help 11

Catechism Questions:

Q. 27. Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist?

A. Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.

Q. 28. Wherein consisteth Christ's exaltation?

A. Christ's exaltation consisteth in his rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

Q. 29. How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?

A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit.

Family Prayer:

All Glory, Laud and Honor

Theoldulph of Orleans

All glory, laud and honor,
To Thee, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring:
Thou art the King of Israel,
Thou David's royal Son,
Who in the Lord's name comest,
The King and Blessed One.

The company of angels
Are praising Thee on high,
And mortal men and all things
Created make reply:
The people of the Hebrews
With psalms before Thee went;
Our praise and prayer and anthems
Before Thee we present.

To Thee, before Thy passion,
They sang their hymns of praise;
To Thee, now high exalted,
Our melody we raise:
Thou didst accept their praises -
Accept the praise we bring,
Who in all good delightest,
Thou good and gracious King!

Joseph – Genesis 37-50

1. What do we first hear of Joseph concerning his brothers? (Gen 37)
2. What do his brothers initially want to do to him? What do they end up doing? (Gen 37)
3. How did Joseph get along in Egypt? (Gen 39)
4. What happens while Joseph is in prison? (Gen 40)
5. How does Joseph become connected with Pharaoh? (Gen 41)
6. What happened when Joseph made himself known to his brothers? (Gen 45)

Verse:

Genesis 50:20 – As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

World Prayer: (from *Operation World*)

South Korea (Republic of Korea)

Population: 48,500,717 Capital: Seoul

Largest Religion: Non-religious

Evangelicals 8,164,977

Answer to Prayer

Praise God for the unique Korean Church. It was founded on sound indigenous principles, blessed with a succession of revivals, refined by persecution and is now one of the foremost Churches in the world for missions vision. It has one of the highest proportions of evangelicals in Asia. Korea's Church presence is highly visible; Korean society has been impacted on many levels by it, and a number of high-profile leaders of politics and industry are Christian. From the first Protestant church planted in 1884, South Korea now has possibly 50,000 Protestant congregations.

Challenge for Prayer

- a) The global success of some Korean brands has exposed corruption in politics and industry. The economy is highly dependent on exports, and inequity between rich and poor is accelerating. Pray for wisdom for leaders and justice for those most vulnerable.
- b) Moral foundations appear to be eroding. This traditionally conservative society must face increasing materialism, a growing generation gap, greatly increased suicide rates, Internet addiction, a rapidly rising sex industry, a vanity-driven cosmetic surgery industry and decreased sensitivity to violence in the media.
- c) Traditional religious faiths increasingly co-exist with Christianity and modern-day agnosticism. A spectrum of Buddhism, Confucianism, Korean shamanism and New Religions accounts for most of the population, although the majority do not faithfully practice.

Home Worship Help 12

Catechism Questions:

Q. 30. How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?

A. The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.

Q. 31. What is effectual calling?

A. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.

Q. 32. What benefits do they that are effectually called partake of in this life?

A. They that are effectually called do in this life partake of justification, adoption, and sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them.

Family Prayer:

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Robert Robinson

Come, thou Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
mount of thy redeeming love.

Here I raise mine Ebenezer;
hither by thy help I'm come;
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;
he, to rescue me from danger,
interposed his precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, O take and seal it,
seal it for thy courts above.

Samson - Judges 13-16

1. What sort of excitement surrounded Samson's birth?
2. What was the condition of Israel when Samson was born? (Judges 13:1)
3. What were the expectations for Samson's life work? (Judges 13:5)
4. What was Samson's criterion for choosing a wife? (Judges 14:3)
5. Was Samson respectful and obedient to his parents? (Judges 14:3)
6. Why do you think his parents did what he asked? (fearful, unconcerned, ...)
7. How did Samson's marriage go? (Judges 14:19- 20)
8. Was Delilah trustworthy? (Judges 16:5-6)
9. How eager was Delilah in helping the Philistines? (Judges 16:16)
10. What happened to Samson? (Judges 16:30)

Verse:

1 Peter 4:10 – As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace...

World Prayer: (from *Operation World*)

Turkey

Population: 75,705,147 Capital: Ankara
Largest Religion: Muslim Evangelicals 7,267

Answer to Prayer

The opening of Turkey to EU influence and its own developing role as a regional diplomatic force. Both invite increased possibilities for sharing the gospel in Turkey.

Challenge for Prayer

- a) The rivalry between secular Turkish nationalism and Islamism. Legality of the hijab (Islamic headscarf) has been a flashpoint for this division. While the constitution, judiciary and military are secular and notionally meant to uphold religious freedom, secular Turks can be as anti-Western, anti-minority and anti-Christian as any hardline Islamists. Wahhabist influences help to fuel fundamentalist Islam, while hardline nationalism is also strong and rising. Pray that Turkey might steer a moderate path between these twin dangers.
- b) The issue of membership in the European Union. Some strive to introduce necessary reforms for greater integration with Europe (especially on human rights, religious freedom and Kurdish, Armenian and Cypriot issues). Others aim towards leadership of a Turkic bloc of nations and an increased role in the Middle East.
- c) Challenges facing the political realm. The role of the military within the state needs adjusting to allow for democratic functioning of the civil government. Recent moves toward multi-cultural and multi-religious democratization have ushered this challenge to the fore, with the resulting national identity crisis provoking a notably reactionary response.

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ABSTRACT

TEACHING AND IMPROVING FAMILY WORSHIP AT THE MILITARY CHAPEL, PARRIS ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA

Patrick Scott Joyner, D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. James M. Hamilton

This project addresses the subject of teaching and improving family worship in the military chapel at Parris Island, South Carolina. Chapter 1 defines the purpose and goals of the project and describes the ministry context.

Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological foundation for the subject of family worship. Passages from the Old and New Testaments in the genres of command, narrative, wisdom literature, poetry, gospel, and epistle are explained.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical and sociological issues of family worship. The historical understanding of family worship as well as contemporary recommendations are included.

Chapter 4 lists the specific method used to carry out the project including sermon topics and additional material used to explain and assist families in worship. The research instruments and mentor questions are also covered.

Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the project including strengths, weaknesses, and personal and theological reflections.

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