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TRAINING PARENTS AT BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH,
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, TO PRACTICE
FAMILY WORSHIP

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TRAINING PARENTS AT BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH,
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, TO PRACTICE
FAMILY WORSHIP

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I dedicate this project to my wonderful loving wife, Deena, and to our precious children,
Christian, Noah, and Holly. I thank God for you every day.

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PREFACE

I want to thank my Savior and Lord for the gift of life, the gift of eternal life, the gifts of my family, and the gift of serving Him in ministry. One day, I long to hear You say, “Well done, My good and faithful servant.”

I want to express my deepest love and gratitude to my wife, Deena, for her encouragement through the process of pursuing of my education.

I want to say thank you to our precious children for their love, support, and understanding. I thank God for my family every day and see them as a gift from my Creator and Savior.

I want to say thank you to Bethlehem Baptist Church for their encouragement and understanding as the project that was designed to glorify God and to be a blessing to the church.

I want to say thank you to my professors, who encouraged and guided me through the process of the project and the pursuit of the degree. May God bless them as they continue to serve God, guide students, and advance God’s kingdom.

I want to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Bill Henard as he supervised me through the project. His insight and effort has helped me accomplish this goal.

Michael A. Towler

Louisville, Kentucky

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODCUTION

The word “legacy” has great value and meaning. What is a legacy? What is a “spiritual legacy?” And how do parents and church leaders ensure that the generations to follow have a positive spiritual legacy that transforms lives in the home, the church, and for eternity? According to Brian Hayes, the definition of “legacy” is “anything handed down from the past, as from an ancestor or predecessor.”¹ Legacy can be understood as an inheritance, heritage, birthright, or even gift that has been passed down from one generation to another. The legacy of a father to his family, and future generations, can be one of the greatest gifts that a father ever bestows on his children. The potential influence, whether positive or negative, not only affects the immediate family unit, but it will impact the generations that follow as well as the church.

The question remains: with all the great resources that are available to parents and church leadership today, why is there still so great a struggle to recapture the hearts of the young adults and to help them stay on the straight and narrow path of God? The answer is based upon a universal truth: if a man or a woman believes even for a moment that they may fail at a specific task, then he/she is tempted to not even attempt the new task. Therefore, the church must implement a strategy that will educate and equip the parents to develop a family worship time that will create and entrust a spiritual legacy in the lives of their children and have an impact on their future grandchildren, both in this life time and into eternity.

¹Brian Hayes, *The Legacy Path: Discovering Intentional Spiritual Parenting* (Nashville: Randall House, 2011), 3.

Context

Bethlehem Baptist Church (BBC) was established as church plant in June of 1948 through the gracious guidance of Farmdale Baptist Church of Louisville, Kentucky. Over the years, the church has experienced steady growth even though the community slowly changed. With the shifting expectations of church ministry, with a diversifying community, and with an aging congregation, Bethlehem has found itself in a period of decline and in need of revitalization. Even amid such challenges, Bethlehem has continued to develop and maintain numerous strengths. For example, the church is a loving church as they welcome all who visit the church. The congregation is supportive of mission endeavors, even to the point of sacrificial giving.

Even considering her strengths, Bethlehem has several significant needs. With the shifting cultural perspective of children and youth ministry, several families with youth and children had left Bethlehem to seek out ministry elsewhere. Over fifty percent of the congregation is over fifty years of age, which results in fewer volunteers willing or able to staff the current ministries yet alone future ministries. Nor is there a sufficient volunteer pool to provide new teachers, committee members, and workers as the older leaders step down. In addition, there is a need for a children's director to help organize the ministry, to establish strong relationships within the families, and to provide consistent communication with the families. Bethlehem has a strong desire to reach out to the community and to draw in families of all ages, with a special focus on younger families. The congregation has a heart for people, a love for God, and a willingness to change, all for the glory of God and for the growth of His church.

BBC is a revitalization opportunity. The church has been in constant decline for over fifteen years and without change will eventually die. By the working of the Holy Spirit, the church can once again experience life and growth. In recent months, the church leadership teams, as well as key leaders in the congregation, have been very sincere about growing the prayer ministry of the church. They know that only God can truly change a church because only God can change the hearts of the people. Therefore, the

congregation desires to be a growing church experiencing professions of faith and baptisms. They desire to reach younger families with the hope of equipping the next wave of leaders and volunteers to carry on the Great Commission of Matthew 28 in their church, the community, and the world. The church's leadership desires to offer specific Bible studies for young adults in their different stages of life, such as engaged couples, newlyweds, young married (with and without children), and marriage enrichment studies. The church desires to connect with the community and to see the fruit of that outreach. They desire to become more diversified in worship on Sundays as well as share the leadership elements of the church with a multi-ethnic staff and committee members. Finally, there is a desire to not only offer studies for small groups, but to truly equip our parents and grandparents on how to have a family worship time at home.

As I have prayed over the needs and desires of the church, and as I have yielded to the leading of the Holy Spirit in my life, it is my desire to pursue a church revitalization strategy that focuses on drawing in the families and equipping them to be the primary disciple-makers in their homes. The strategy will consist of educating the church through the Word of God of His design and plan for parents to be primarily responsible for the spiritual growth of the children in the home. This design is meant to have a life-changing impact on the current generation of children and then to be carried into the next generation as well. The strategy is meant to develop a practical guide that is educational and informative about how to have family worship in the home. It is meant to offer practical step-by-step instruction of how to practice family worship through Bible reading, prayer, selection of a song, and Scripture memory. It is meant to equip the parents to be the spiritual leaders in the home and in the lives of their children. The strategy will challenge parents to know God's Word, to live God's truth, and to diligently nurture and instruct their children in the ways of the Lord. The hope of the strategy is to begin a process of spiritual growth for the families that will result in on-going training throughout the years, not only for Bethlehem, but as a model for other sister churches.

Rationale

The home is the foundation of the church. The health of the church is directly impacted by the health of the home. If the home is unhealthy, it is a reflection of the spiritual lives of the parents (or guardians). Therefore, it is critical to address the spiritual issues within the home in order to guide families to a place of spiritual wellness and fruitfulness. Even though the issues that need to be evaluated are numerous, the purpose of this project will focus on the basic building blocks of Bible reading, prayer, singing, and Scripture memorization that will change lives and grant the opportunity for a spiritual legacy to be developed and passed down to generations.

Family worship is a vitally biblical practice for the Christian. The Word of God reveals biblical commands and scriptural models that promote and expect spiritual disciplines to be in the lives of genuine believers, both young and old. A family devotion time can only be built upon the personal practices of the parents. It is vital to establish and nurture the basic elements of spiritual growth in the lives of the parents as well as the lives of the children at BBC. God's word commands the parents to embrace God's truth for themselves as they also embrace the biblical command to teach their children on a daily basis.

Family worship is a vital fundamental element of the home. Every family within BBC is built upon the individual lives of the family members. The family is under attack everyday by the schemes of Satan through numerous channels. It is vital to build the spiritual strength of each family member to help protect the spiritual well-being of the entire family. A family devotion time will enable the Word of God to influence the mind and heart of each family member. A season of prayer and song is a time of reflection upon the character and faithfulness of God. A commitment to memorize the Holy Scriptures will allow God's truth to be hidden in our inner-most being as it guides us in our everyday lives. In order to ensure that the individual family member has a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ, and to encourage the personal spiritual disciplines of Bible reading, prayer, song, and Scripture memorization, it is vital to lead through a time of

faithful, daily family worship. As parents, they cannot pass on what they themselves do not possess. If the parents do not have a vibrant relationship with their Savior, then they cannot pass on a healthy relationship to their children.

Family worship is a vital fundamental element of BBC. The church is made up of families. When the family units are spiritually healthy, then the church will be healthier as the body of Christ. If the homes are unhealthy, then the spiritual weaknesses will also be visible in the church body. In order to ensure the church to be as healthy as possible, it is critical to engage, encourage, and equip the parents to be the spiritual leaders in the home. As the family goes, so goes the church.

The Word of God commands spiritual disciplines to be in the lives of parents as well as to be taught to the children. The health of the individual directly impacts the family unit. Each family unit impacts the body of Christ in the congregation at BBC. It is ever so critical to build the lives and the families of the church membership upon the Word of God and in faithful family worship.

Purpose

The purpose of the project was to train parents at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, to practice family worship.

Goals

The following goals were designed to accomplish the purpose of successfully training parents to practice family worship in the home:

1. The first goal was to assess the current discipleship practices among members with children in the home at Bethlehem Baptist Church.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-week sermon series on God's design for the family in the process of discipleship at Bethlehem Baptist Church.
3. The third goal was to develop and implement a thirteen-week practical guide for family worship at Bethlehem Baptist Church.
4. The fourth goal was to increase knowledge of family worship by preaching the sermon series at Bethlehem Baptist Church.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project included two pre-series surveys, one post-series survey, and three evaluation rubrics.² The four goals determined the effectiveness of the project.

The first goal was to assess the current discipleship practices among the families with children and adolescence who are members of Bethlehem Baptist Church. This first goal was measured by administering the Family Discipleship Practice Survey (FDPS) to twenty-member families who have at least one child or adolescent residing in the home.³ The goal was considered successfully met when ten families have completed the FDPS and the summary of the inventory has been analyzed to help develop a clearer understanding of the discipleship practices in the homes at BBC.⁴

The second goal was to develop a six-week sermon series on God's design for family worship in the home at BBC. The sermon series aimed to teach the biblical role of parent-led discipleship. The principles taught helped establish a family devotion time in the home and began to impart a spiritual legacy for the family. This goal was measured by a panel of three ministerial professionals at BBC who used a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the sermon series.⁵ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the rubric evaluation indicators meet or exceed the sufficiency level. If the initial feedback would have yielded less than 90 percent, the sermon series would have been revised until it met or exceeded the sufficient level.

²All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

³Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011). See appendix 1.

⁴BBC has an active membership of approximately 260 members. Fifty-five percent of the congregation is fifty years old and older. Out of the remaining members, approximately twenty-five families have children and adolescents living within the home. A selection of twenty families represents approximately one-quarter of the membership with children living within the home.

⁵See appendix 2.

The third goal was to develop and implement a thirteen-week practical guide for family worship in the home at BBC. The guide helped equip parents with the foundational tools to consistently lead their family in a daily devotion time that consisted of Bible reading, Bible discussion, prayer, Bible principles (catechisms), and Scripture memorization. This goal was measured by a panel of three ministry professionals who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the guide.⁶ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficiency level. If the initial feedback yielded less than 90 percent, the guide would have been revised until it met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The fourth goal was to increase knowledge of family worship by means of preaching the six-week sermon series on family worship on Sunday mornings at BBC. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-survey to twenty-member families (which had children in the home) who attended the sermon series. The surveys were utilized to measure the change in knowledge, confidence, and practice of family worship in the home.⁷ This goal was considered successfully met when ten surveys were completed and the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores. As well, this goal was successfully met when each parent scores the sufficient or above level on the evaluation rubric.

Definitions and Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms will be used in the ministry project:

Discipleship. Discipleship is “a personal and intentional process in which one of more Christians guide unbelievers or less-mature believers to embrace and apply the

⁶See appendix 3.

⁷See appendix 4.

gospel in every part of their lives.”⁸ Timothy Jones continues, “Discipleship is a process that includes personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ, as he has been revealed to us in Scripture. Discipleship involves developing perspectives and practices that reflect the mind of Christ.”⁹ Timothy Jones also notes, “The gospel, expressed and applied in the context of the community of faith, is the center point of discipleship; conformity to Jesus Christ is the goal of discipleship; ‘spiritual development’ and ‘Christian formation’ describe progress toward this goal.”¹⁰ The basic understanding of discipleship is the process to whole-heartedly follow Jesus Christ and to make disciples who in turn make other disciples.

Family worship. Family worship “is that sphere of worship which incorporates those living under the same roof in a time of worship together.”¹¹ Family worship will be identified in this project as Bible reading, Bible discussion, prayer, Bible principles, and Scripture memorization. Family worship is not confined to the home only but can occur outside the home in any circumstance where teachable moments exist.

Three delimitations were placed on the family worship project. First, for the project, I selected twenty families within the church with children living within the home. The selection of twenty families was a reflection of approximately one-quarter of families that are members of BBC and was sufficient to evaluate the effectiveness of the project on families. Second, the project consisted of six lessons in a sermon series equipping the parents and guardians to establish and maintain family devotions. Even though there is freedom to develop a lengthier series, the sermon series consisted of only six messages. Finally, this project developed a practical guide for family worship that focused on

⁸Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 17.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Jason Helopoulos, *A Neglected Grace: Family Worship in the Christian Home* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2014), 26.

thirteen weeks of family devotions. Even though there was freedom to develop a fuller, lengthier guide, for the purpose of the project, it was only thirteen weeks. The guide focused on Bible reading, Bible discussion, prayer, Bible principles (catechisms), and Scripture memorization for an entire quarter of the year for the family.

Conclusion

The Word of God says that the church has the responsibility to equip the believer for the work of the ministry. Every believer has a ministry field within his or her own home. Therefore, by implementing the daily use of Bible reading, prayer, Bible principles, and Scripture memorization, the family will be stronger and spiritually healthier. As parents embrace God's design for the family, their children will have greater opportunities to encounter God and to secure a personal relationship with Christ themselves. The home will have a spiritual fortitude that will not falter, and future generations will be handed down a spiritual legacy that will make difference in life and in eternity.

CHAPTER 2

THE SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION FOR FAMILY DEVOTIONS IN THE HOME OF THE BELIEVER

God's Word is the authority for the both the individual believer's life as well as church leadership. Therefore, the Scriptures must be consulted to determine what is biblical and appropriate for the Christian home and the church of Christ. Both testaments of the Bible have clear direction to the parents, specifically the father, to be the primary disciple-makers in the lives of their children and their homes. Even though the home today is not defined by the traditional perspective (a father, a mother, and 2.5 children), the parents, grandparents, or legal guardians must be encouraged and equipped to nurture children in the Lord as the biblical mandate describes.

Deuteronomy 6

God speaks through Moses to the leaders of Israel and to the leaders of the home as He addresses the biblical mandate to spiritually instruct children in the home. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is one of the most powerful texts giving instruction to leaders and parents:

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all you soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.¹

The text is clear that what God commanded Moses to instruct the leaders of Israel was intended to be brought back into the homes of God's people and expected to be carried

¹All Scripture is taken from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

out. God’s message to Israel was to be embraced and lived out by the adults and purposely taught to the children as well. The parents were to impress or etch God’s Word into their children’s lives. Eugene Merrill writes, “So much so is this case that the covenant recipient must impress the words of covenant faith into the thinking of his children by inscribing them there with indelible sharpness and precision.”² The impact of God’s Word being internalized in the life of a person, especially a child, will be all-inclusive. As Moses spoke to the leaders of Israel, he commanded them to “be careful to do what the Lord your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. Walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you” (Deut 5:32-33). In order to teach the children of the current and future generations to “fear the Lord,” the standard for full obedience of God’s Word to the leaders of Israel was decreed and expected so that the message would be taught and exemplified by the adults for the children. In order to have a healthy reverence for God as well as a genuine fear of His chastisement, the children will be purposely and diligently instructed in the precepts of God’s Word. Even the slightest variation would not be permissible by God’s standard.

As the Shema was introduced to Israel by the words of Moses, the decree to love God with all of a person’s heart, soul, and strength was directly commanded to the adults. Moses reaffirmed this command when he immediately said, “These commands that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children . . .” (Deut 6:6-7a). It is clear that the adults were to completely embrace God’s truths in their personal lives and to diligently teach them to their children so that the generations to follow will discover Who God is as well as develop a holy reverence for God and live in full obedience to God. In understanding the anthropological terms of heart, soul, and strength, Merrill writes that “the heart is the seat of intellect, equivalent to the mind or

²Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1994), 167.

rational part of humankind.”³ He also clarifies that “to ‘be upon the heart’ is to be in one’s constant, conscious reflection.”⁴ The precepts of God are to be a continual thought in the daily lives of parents which enable them to carry out the purposeful conversations with the children from sunrise to sunset. Merrill also identifies the soul as “the invisible part of the individual, the person qua person including the will and sensibilities.”⁵ Finally, he describes a person’s strength as “the physical side with all its functions and capabilities.”⁶ The Shema is an all-encompassing declaration, requiring every essence of man to love God. This type of love will result in the reverence and obedience that honors God as well as the type of example that should be practiced from those who teach God’s principles to the younger generations.

Moses continues to explain the width of the command as he describes four different times that God’s precepts are to be lived out by the parents and diligently taught to the children. These four descriptions of sitting, walking, rising, and laying down are not limited or confining; rather these are expressions that imply that there are teachable moments throughout the day of which parents should take advantage to help their children see the hand of God and to think on the Word of God. Through this practice, the children will also dwell on the precepts of God in their heart and mind as well.

The expressions involving the hands and foreheads of God’s people were better understood to the Israelites in their day as compared to modern or western Christianity. In explanation to the hand, Merrill writes that “they would identify their bearer as a member of the covenant community.”⁷ The symbols on the hands and foreheads were meant to make a declaration of faith as well as a commitment to the covenant that God has agreed

³Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 164.

⁴Ibid., 167.

⁵Ibid., 164.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., 168.

to with the Israelites. These outward symbols would further the cause of making a person's faith known to others as they live as examples of God's commandments.

Ajith Fernando offers further insight to the study of Deuteronomy as he writes his commentary on learning how to obey in love towards a loving God. He suggests, that even though the Scriptures were given to enable man to obey God, that it is through the direct commands to fear God and to love God that obedience to God is only possible.⁸ So it becomes absolutely critical that the words of God infiltrate and saturate the mind in order to transform people into the holy, loving vessels that God desires for His creation. The internalization of God's Word is meant to impact both the internal and external elements of humanity. The heart, mind, soul, spirit, emotions, desires, motives, thoughts, words, and deeds. . . . all transformed by the sanctifying work of the Scriptures.⁹ The teaching ministry initiated by God, through Moses, was directly commanded to the parents. As the New Testament church was established by God's design, the teaching function was extended to the body of Christ as well. It was never God's plan for the church to replace the role of the parents, but rather for the church to equip the parent for the work of the ministry (even within the home) as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Ephesus (Eph 4:1-10). Fernando develops this thought as he writes, "The church provides spiritual parents to those who don't have earthly parents to perform the task. This can be done through Sunday school, church Bible studies, and Sunday worship."¹⁰ In reference to the commands of God being internalized upon the hearts of the Israelites, Fernando writes, "This . . . is saying that the person's thinking and behavior is markedly affected by the Word."¹¹ The type of progressive sanctification that is taught

⁸Ajith Fernando, *Deuteronomy: Loving Obedience to a Loving God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 254-57.

⁹John 17:17 – Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them with truth; Your word is truth."

¹⁰Fernando, *Deuteronomy*, 265.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 263.

in New Testament churches is founded upon the Old Testament principles of God's Word being internalized in the hearts and minds of God's people. Such practice will better enable the parents to be living examples of God's Word for their children.

Charles William Bingham, in his translation of John Calvin's commentaries of Moses' writings, identifies the repetition in the Pentateuch in regard to teaching children the Commandments of God. Bingham notes the command of Numbers 15:38 to "speak to the children of Israel" has been repeated by Moses in Deuteronomy 6 :6-9 and Deuteronomy 11:18-20. The author makes a point of God's purpose in repetition as one that should bring awareness to the message that God choose to repeat. Bingham translates Calvin's original commentary to express that "God has no satisfaction in mere empty knowledge, but that He demands serious affections and practical performance."¹² Calvin addresses God's command to the leadership through Moses that a careful study of God's Word is required for their personal lives as well as the instruction of the children. Calvin describes the heart of man as "the memory and other faculties of the mind . . . so great a treasure . . . they should hide it in their hearts, or so fix this doctrine deeply in their minds that it should never escape."¹³ Calvin is quick to add that "fathers should diligently attend and apply themselves to the duty of instruction."¹⁴ Even during Calvin's day, when persecution was imminent for the doctrines and practices that he and his followers embraced, Calvin was sure to address the importance of the fatherly duty in obedience to God's Word. Calvin identified his perception to the timing of teaching, and the repetition of teaching when he wrote, "He commands them severally to speak of the precepts of the Law . . . because without diligent exercise, it usually happens that whatever men have once learnt is soon lost."¹⁵ Calvin concludes his commentary on this section by addressing that

¹²John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses*, ed. Charles Bingham, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 365.

¹³Ibid., 366.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., 368.

the fathers “also teach their children, whereby God’s Law would ever be maintained in vigor by perpetual succession.”¹⁶ The succession to which Calvin was referring is similar to Psalm 78 where the Word of God is to be passed down to the grandchildren and the generations to follow. This concept lays the foundation for a spiritual legacy to be established by one person that has the potential to impact dozens if not hundreds of descendants, as the Lord so blesses.

Ephesians 6

The Apostle Paul gives divinely inspired instruction to the family in Ephesians 5 and 6. As he focuses on the parent-child relationship, Paul writes in Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Once again, an imperative is given that requires the parents, especially the fathers, to be the primary disciple-makers within the Christian home. Kent Hughes offers this thought in commentary to the passage: “What an enviable picture this positive instruction presents in concert: solid discipline – clear verbal instruction – all wrapped in nourishing tenderness.”¹⁷ According to Ephesians 6:1-4, both the fathers and the children have obligations placed upon them by the Word of God towards each other. Fathers are charged with a negative command, “Do not provoke your children to anger.” The apostle Paul repeats this command to the church at Colossae when he writes, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart” (Col 3:24). The word exasperate simply means to provoke or to make bitter. Paul uses a similar expression in a description of God making Israel angry because of their unbelief. God will cause Israel to be jealous and angry because God will bless other nations besides Israel. (Rom 10:19) Kent Hughes identifies provocation as to causing a child “to seethe

¹⁶Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses*, 369.

¹⁷R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 199.

with resentment and irritation.”¹⁸ Andrew Lincoln writes, “Fathers are made responsible for ensuring that they do not provoke anger in their children.”¹⁹ Lincoln continues to identify different applications of provocation in the interactions between parents and children. He writes,

This involves avoiding attitude, words, and actions which would drive a child to angry exasperation or resentment and thus rule out excessively severe disciplining, unreasonably harsh demands, abuse of authority, arbitrariness, unfairness, constant nagging and condemnation, subjecting a child to humiliation, and all forms of gross insensitivity to a child’s needs and sensibilities.²⁰

Hughes identifies three basic ways that may cause such exasperation which should be avoided, such as: “unreasonableness, fault-finding, and inconsistency.”²¹ There are numerous ways in which parents can exasperate their children, and the concern is not only the moment of frustration for them, but the greater harm that can be done. Since parents are to be representations of God’s love and character to the children, their little ones can develop a wrong understanding of who God truly is. If they develop an unhealthy picture of God, then most likely it will impede the working of the Holy Spirit in the child’s life as well.

Paul offers both a negative command and a positive charge to the parents. He continues in the epistle, “. . .but to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” The command is direct; parents are to raise their children in a very specific way. They are to nurture their children in the Lord and raise them on a path towards God. Each child is responsible to respond the gospel in their individual lives, but the parents’ responsibility is to faithfully model and teach their children in the faith and prayerfully

¹⁸Hughes, *Ephesians*, 198.

¹⁹Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, World Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1990), 406.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Hughes, *Ephesians*, 198.

lead them to a deeper understanding of salvation and living the Christian life. The Apostle Paul uses the word “nourish” in the previous chapter describing a man’s attitude towards his own body as a reflection of how he is to care for his wife. There is to be purposeful care given in order to bring about a specific result. The raising of children is not a task that is to be taken lightly or neglected. The call to nurture the children in the home is a call to love them as well to give purposeful direction towards a specific goal. Hughes identifies that Paul’s first expression to the positive command is one of gentleness. The words ‘bring them up’ means ‘to nourish or feed.’”²² There is a picture of tenderness in the over-all process of raising children towards the Lord.

Paul says that discipline or admonishment is a part of the process. Paul has utilized this word in his writings to the church at Corinth when he sought to admonish them as “beloved children.”²³ Lincoln notes that “admonishing and teaching are central to his [Paul’s] ministry.”²⁴ Lincoln continues, “The activity of admonishing can take place through encouragement or reproof but usually implies that there is some difficulty or problem in the attitude or behavior of those receiving the admonition that needs to be resolved or some opposition to be overcome.”²⁵ Even though gentleness is at the on-set of the command, there is a reality that at times, a stronger approach may be necessary in order to communicate the seriousness of the lesson. This does not ever justify any form of child abuse, but rather a sternness that helps communicate the severity of the principles being taught. Admonishment does not need to be one-sided, meaning that it is all negative and solely a form of punishment; it can so be accomplished through encouraging words of wisdom. The important element is that, as parents learn their children’s personalities,

²²Hughes, *Ephesians*, 198-99.

²³“I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children” (1Cor 4:14).

²⁴Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 407.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 407-8.

they can implement the proper techniques to help nurture and admonish the children with the greatest impact in the heart of the child resulting in exterior behaviors displaying their love for God, for their parents, and for others.

Paul offers one other part to the equation. Parents are to instruct their children in the pathway towards God. Hughes writes, “The word ‘instruction’ literally means ‘to place before the mind.’”²⁶ Instruction can occur in both positive and negative formats. It carries with it the idea of verbal communication referred to as teachable moments, and instruction can also be exercised with a degree of sternness in the spirit of confrontation. The end goal is to guide the child in the path of God and His Word. John Stott is direct in his understanding of the word to mean “primarily verbal education.”²⁷ The means that verbal communication will vary depends on the personality of the child and the teachable moment at hand, but the command to the parents is to verbally teach their children in the pathway of the Lord. Solomon even identifies the need to demonstrate the love a parent has for his/her child through the discipline and the instruction when he writes, “He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who love him disciplines him diligently” (Prov 13:24). In regard to a parent’s discipline of his/her child, R. C. Sproul reminds parents that “the ultimate model of discipline and chastisement is God Himself, who always tempers His wrath with mercy.”²⁸

It is equally important to note the path that Paul identifies as a part of the nurturing process. Paul does not leave the direction to the will or imagination of human beings, rather he identifies that the training is to be “in the Lord.” Peter O’Brien writes, “The concern of parents is not simply that their sons and daughters will be obedient to their authority, but that through this godly training and admonition their children will

²⁶Hughes, *Ephesians*, 199.

²⁷John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 248.

²⁸R. C. Sproul, *The Purpose of God: An Exposition of Ephesians* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 141.

come to know and obey the Lord himself.”²⁹ Even though this prayer may be the desire of every Christian parent, the Lord must deal with each child’s heart in the process of conviction, repentance, faith, and salvation. O’Brien clarifies what he believes to be the focus of the admonition as he states that “the training and instruction is the sphere of the Lord or has Him as its reference point. In other words, it is truly Christian instruction.”³⁰ In application of the biblical mandate to parents to train their children in the Lord, John Phillips writes, “Christian parents have no greater responsibility in life than to make sure that their children are raised in the fear of God, in the knowledge of God, in the knowledge of the gospel, in reverence for God’s Word, and in the presence of the Lord Jesus.”³¹

Psalm 78

In the collection of King David’s Psalms, there are numerous writings that have specific purposes. Psalm 78 is attributed to the author known as Asaph. It is likely that he wrote under the leadership of King David since the concluding verses name David as the final character in the lesson. Asaph writes a lengthy psalm to Israel to remind them of their faulty past as well as the faithfulness of God. God’s faithfulness was not as much to the nation of Israel as it was to His own character and word. When Israel would sin, God would chastise. When Israel would repent, God would deliver. The sin of Israel was attributed to their own rebellion and hard hearts. In the process of recalling the nation’s history and God’s faithfulness, Asaph was committed to addressing actual historical events and to draw lessons from them to pass down to future generations. Asaph reveals that what he is about to address was entrusted to him by those who have gone before him.

²⁹Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 446.

³⁰Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 447.

³¹John Phillips, *Exploring Ephesians & Philippians*, *The John Phillips Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing, 1993), 175.

In this Psalm, the author challenges parents to think generationally when it comes to the spiritual training of their children. He writes in Psalm 78:1-3, “Listen to my instruction . . . which we have heard and know, and our fathers have told us.” Asaph is about to offer instruction to his sons and all Israel based upon what he was taught by his father. He continues in Psalm 78:4-5, “We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD . . . which he commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children.” At this point, Asaph reveals multi-generational teaching in the praises, principles, and faithfulness of God. The author then writes, “That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children” (Ps 78:6). Here is one of the greatest multi-generational challenges that God’s people should be thinking of their grandchildren as they lead their immediate children in the spiritual development within their homes. W. S. Plumer writes, “The law required a careful and frequent recital of divine doings and teachings by the aged to the young . . . the rule was, the father to the sons, the elder to the younger shall make known the words and works of Jehovah.”³² There will always be a challenge that requires discernment on the part of every parent and guardian. Asaph did not spend time relaying stories about fictional events or characters as his focus to his children, rather, as Plumer notes, “The things, of which the prophet was about to speak, were not fables, nor human inventions. They were not only written in the sacred books, but were woven into the history and traditions of the whole nation.”³³ It is a disservice to the younger generations when believing parents give greater attention and celebration when it comes to fictional characters rather than rejoicing in true, historical events. Another point to recognize about this psalm is that not every event mentioned placed Israel in a positive light. Another area where parents struggle is an integrity issue. Each

³²W. S. Plumer, *Psalms*, Geneva Series of Commentaries (Chelsea, MI: Sheridan Books, 2016), 746.

³³Ibid.

nation has great moments, and every nation has dark moments. History can be forgotten and edited to the point where a nation's recent past is glorified resulting in a false version of the historical record. Asaph addressee historical events in the nation of Israel that did not glorify their past but rather with integrity revealed actual events. Asaph's account addressed numerous mistakes and sins that Israel committed, but his focus was on God and His faithful response. There are great lessons to be learned from a nation's past just like there are numerous lessons to be passed down from a parent's mistakes to help future generations make better choices. David's focus was not the glorification of the nation of Israel, rather it was the character and response of a faithful, holy God. Charles Ryrie notes, "Asaph recited the early history of the nation in order to warn future generations against a repetition of unfaithfulness."³⁴ History carries powerful lessons for future generations, but it critical that history is recalled with faithfulness to the events in order to learn the truest lessons.

Just as Asaph utilized historical events to teach lessons, parents must exercise discernment as they impart stories and celebrate holidays. As children grow, they are told by their parents that God is real, Santa Clause is real, the Easter Bunny is real, and that the Tooth Fairy is real. In time, these children discover that the Tooth Fairy is not real, the Easter Bunny is not real, and that Santa is not real; yet for some reason, the child should still believe that what the parent, who has deceived their children about these other character and events, are being honest to what they have taught about God. God's Word never justifies lies or deception. The over-celebration of western holidays does not compare to times of war as in the Canaan conquest with the circumstances surrounding Jericho and Ai.³⁵ It is one thing for parents and children to utilize and enjoy imagination,

³⁴Charles Ryrie, *Psalms and Proverbs, The Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 56.

³⁵The account in Josh 2 where Rahab lied to protect the two Israelite spies from the soldiers of Ai is descriptive, not prescriptive. In times of war, deception is utilized as a tool to mislead the enemy; however, lying for entertainment purposes can never be equally compared to times of war.

but it is completely different to purposely deceive for entertainment purposes. The integrity of the parent will be drawn into question at some point by the child and will be held accountable by a holy God. It is imperative, that while celebrating fictional holidays, parents make a godly choice to focus on the true, historical events rather than fall into the trap of a culture that thrives on deceptions, lies, and depravity.³⁶ Therefore, it is commendable that the Psalms displays integrity in addressing Israel's past in order to teach valuable lessons for the children.

John Calvin addresses the Psalm and declares that “the law was given not for one age only; but that the father should transmit it to the children, as if it were their rightful inheritance.”³⁷ There is a powerful concept that can be communicated to parents and church leaders to realize that the spiritual training of children is both an inheritance as well as a spiritual legacy. Parents should consider the spiritual heritage to be eternally more important than just the material inheritance that can be entrusted to the younger generations. This inheritance is one that must begin at the earliest of ages for the children and must be faithfully lived out in their presence for the remainder of the years that the parent can speak into the life of the child. Church leaders need to recognize the importance to equip parents to embrace and fulfill their God-given responsibility to train their children in the Lord. Calvin connects the Psalm with the words of the Lord directed to the character of Abraham when He said, “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do

³⁶Rom 1:18-28 reveals that man has rejected the truth of God for a lie; therefore, God has given man over to the depravity of his corrupt mind. If sinful man is leading the charge on the celebration of fictional holidays, then why would believing parents buy into this rationale? Celebrate truth, not lies.

³⁷John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 2, ed. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 2:231.

justice and judgment.”³⁸ In regard to this divine statement, Calvin says that “this was enjoined upon the patriarchs as a necessary part of their duty.”³⁹

Charles Spurgeon chides any parent or church that fails to act on the intended command to teach children the way of the Lord. Spurgeon writes, “Our negligent silence shall not deprive our own and our father’s offspring of the precious truth of God, it would be shameful indeed if we did so.”⁴⁰ Spurgeon made his view clear that the church has a responsibility as well as the parent to instruct children in highest education possible, the type that instructs children in the ways of the Lord. He writes, “We will look forward to future generations, and endeavor to provide for their godly education. It is the duty of the church of God to maintain, in fullest vigor, every agency intended of the religious education of the young.”⁴¹ Even as the psalm addresses the need to transmit God’s faithfulness to future generations, Spurgeon writes, “As far on as our brief life allows us to arrange, we must industriously provide for the godly nurture of youth.”⁴² There must be a purposeful plan to share and diligently teach children the Word of God and the faithful recall of history to help children see the mighty works of God. Finally, Spurgeon is convinced that there is but “one object aimed at this transmission; the testimony is only given that it may be passed on to succeeding generations.”⁴³ The desire of the parent and church leadership is to present the Word of God to the younger generations so that the Holy Scriptures can invade the hearts and minds of the children, allowing the Holy Spirit to bring conviction resulting in salvation, and guiding them on their spiritual journey through their progressive sanctification.

³⁸Gen 18:19 – The Lord spoke these words when two angels accompanied Him to visit Abraham prior to announcing that God is about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

³⁹Calvin, *Psalms*, 232.

⁴⁰Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 1:331.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., 332.

⁴³Ibid.

Proverbs 22

King Solomon offers a proverbial truth when he writes in Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.” A proverbial truth is a general truth that is meant to be a general guide for life; however, it is not a promise that guarantees a specific result. Solomon’s instruction is directed to the family of a child offering insight to study their adolescent, to discern their God-given personality, and to learn how to best teach them the principles of God’s Word. There is a consensus of the meaning of the proverb, yet there are some who offer differing perspectives on interpreting and applying this proverb to the family. Several commentators, including Raymond Ortlund, have agreed that the phrase “train up” has a direct meaning to “dedicate.”⁴⁴ This word has been used in the Old Testament to describe basic houses and the temple.⁴⁵ Solomon uses the word in reference to the parent’s role in raising a child. Ortlund also identifies that “there is more at stake for your child than getting into the best schools and the best sports and the best jobs. Your child has an eternal destiny. God has called you to train up your child to go to Heaven.”⁴⁶ He simplifies his application by writing, “Your parental role is to raise your child to be gung-ho for Christ.”⁴⁷ Ortlund offers insight into the meaning of “train up” when he writes that it “was used of rubbing the palate of a newborn child with a date mixture, to get the child to suck. It means to accustom a child to a taste and to motivate the child to take it . . . the best way for you to influence your child in that way is for you to be a dedicated Christian yourself.”⁴⁸ Teach God’s Word to your children by being an example of God’s principles in your own life.

⁴⁴Raymond Ortlund Jr., *Proverbs: Wisdom that Works* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 154.

⁴⁵Deut 20:5 – a house was dedicated to God; 1 Kgs 8:63 – Solomon dedicated the temple after its construction was finished.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

Duane Garrett suggests, “One should train a child using vocabulary, concepts, and illustrations a child can understand . . . one should begin instructing a child in elementary principles of right and wrong as soon as possible.”⁴⁹ Garrett writes that “a better interpretation is, loosely rendered, ‘Train a child in a manner befitting a child.’”⁵⁰ Garrett also clarifies his understanding of the application when he writes, “It does not mean that instruction should be tailor-made for each individual child (however valid that concept may be)”⁵¹ Even though a number of commentators recognize the possibility and the validity of training a child in accordance with their personality, they struggle to embrace that application in Solomon’s proverb. To clarify, the truth is not to be altered based upon the child’s personality, just the methods utilized in order to best teach and instruct a child that has been entrusted to the parents by God.

Derek Kidner, an author for the Tyndale Commentaries, identifies the expression to mean, “The training prescribed is lit. ‘according to his (the child’s) way,’ implying, it seems, respect for his individuality and vocation, though not for his self-will.”⁵² Kinder expresses that “the stress is on parental opportunity and duty.”⁵³ Kinder identifies that the training offered to a child should be in accordance with the personality and individuality that has been given him/her by God. Again, the emphasis is not giving in to the child’s depraved will, but rather to understand the personality of the child to best train him/her in the Lord. The Bible study tool Shepherd’s Notes identifies multiple implications of this proverb in its notes. At first the authors try to clear up several misunderstandings about the proverb: “The proverb does not mean that if one gives a

⁴⁹Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 1993), 188.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Derek Kidner, *Proverbs*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1964), 147.

⁵³Ibid.

child instruction in the truth during his childhood that he will return to that teaching in later years after a period of rebellion.”⁵⁴ The author also clarifies, “Nor does it mean that one should train up a child ‘according to his or her own nature,’ as though the point where that one should tailor training to the individual personality of every child (there may be truth in that, but it is not the point of this verse).”⁵⁵ As the commentators clarify their view of the verse, they also acknowledged the alternate view of allowing the personality of the child to have influence on the training process. Charles Ryrie supports the idea that the personality of the children should have an impact on the methods chosen to impart God’s truth. Ryrie writes, “The instruction must take into account his individuality and inclinations, and be in keeping with his degree of physical and mental development.”⁵⁶ The *Shepherd’s Notes* include additional insight by explaining that “the ideal is that if parents begin by teaching small children in the way of God on a level that they can understand and increase the sophistication of the teaching as the child grows, it is much more likely that the child will remain steadfast in the truth.”⁵⁷ Finally, the Shepherd commentators write, “Christian nurture, the education of small children in the things of God, is a fundamental duty of Christian families and of the church. But this nurture must be appropriate to the psychological development, intellectual comprehension, and moral consciousness of small children.”⁵⁸ The emphasis is a balanced approach based upon the fundamental truths of God’s Word that incorporate both insight into the child’s personality as well as their developmental stage and ability.

⁵⁴David Shepherd, ed., *Proverbs, Shepherd Notes Series* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 1998), 64.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶Charles Ryrie, *Psalms and Proverbs, The Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 134.

⁵⁷Shepherd, *Proverbs*, 64.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

The editors of *The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible* offer insight to the word “way” (derek) which is used repeatedly throughout Proverbs to indicate a chosen path of life. There are only two possible paths mentioned in the book: the path of righteousness and wisdom that leads to life and the path of wickedness and foolishness that leads to death.”⁵⁹ Solomon would not leave the path of a child to the parents’ choice, much less to the preference of a depraved child; God has already spoken to the parents that the faith entrusted to them is to be diligently taught to their children. Therefore, the “way” of Proverbs 6 is the path of righteousness already determined by God’s good counsel. The commentators sum up their writing by stating, “Parents are responsible to start their children toward the path of righteousness.”⁶⁰ The general truth behind Proverbs 6 is based upon the spiritual foundation that parents build into the lives of the children. The commentators conclude, “Children who are taught the right way by godly parents can never completely depart from the training. They may choose not to live by it, but they cannot get away from it entirely. The training they received is permanently inscribed on their hearts and minds.”⁶¹ This thought serves a powerful reminder for both good and evil, that the parents are inscribing a path into the hearts and minds of their children by what they do and say. The lessons learned will be learned by children through the example of parents as well as by what they purposely teach them. God is declaring through Solomon that parents embrace their God-given role as the primary disciple-makers in their homes for the sake of the children’s future and eternity.

Solomon writes much in regard to the training of children in the home as well as the parental responsibility of spiritual training. For example, Proverbs 22:6 and Proverbs 20:11 both encourage training a child at an early age. “Even a child is known by

⁵⁹Leadership Ministries Worldwide, eds., *Proverbs*, *The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible* (Chattanooga, TN: Alpha-Omega Ministries, 2012), 339.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.” (KJV) Solomon continues to encourage parents to instruct their children in a loving way in both doctrine and sanctification. “Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake not my law. For I was my father’s son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said to me, ‘Let thine heart retain my words; keep my commandments and live’” (Prov 4:1-4 KJV). Such Scriptures reveal the truth that impacted Solomon in his early years as well as what he is passing along to his children. Solomon will continue the instruction to parents to lead children by living a godly example before them as well. “My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my way” (Prov 14:26 KJV).

Secondary Biblical Support

Joshua, the successor of Moses, called the leadership of Israel together and challenged them to make a decision for themselves and their families as to whom they would serve in the Promise Land. The decision that Joshua made was also one that his family would embrace when he said: “Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”⁶² Joshua embraced the responsibility to make spiritual decisions for his family and to lead them down the right paths. One of the clearest New Testament passages of spiritual training was found in the life of the young preacher Timothy when the apostle Paul encouraged him to remain strong in the faith. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:5, “For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.” Here is an example of a family faith being transmitted down from generation to generation.

When the Gospels are examined, there are a number of encounters that require attention as well. For example, when Jesus was twelve years old and was separated from

⁶²Josh 24:14-15. Joshua spoke these words in his final days before the leaders of Israel.

His earthly parents at the Passover feast, they found Him several days later in the temple sitting among the teachers having ongoing spiritual conversations (Luke 2:41-52). How would Jesus have known that He could have had such conversations if it was not already an acceptable practice? Most likely, it was permissible for a child to go to the temple and synagogues for spiritual instruction. Even though Jesus was still considered a boy in the culture of His day, the spiritual teachers were conversing with Him and amazed at His depth of knowledge. As Jesus began His public ministry, He chastised the disciples for denying children the opportunity to come to Jesus. Instead, He said, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matt 19:13-15). What right would Jesus have to teach or bless the children from the eyes of an average parent in Christ’s day, unless it was already understood that the crowd saw Jesus as a teacher of God’s Word and was permitted to participate in the children’s spiritual training. In addition, when Jesus was feeding the five thousand, a need arose to feed the people who were in attendance and hungry. The disciples lacked the resources to feed such a crowd until Andrew brought a little boy, who most likely was accompanied by his parents, who had a small meal of five loaves of bread and two fishes (Mark 6:33-44). Again, what was a child doing attending a teaching session of the great teacher Jesus Himself? Again, most likely, it must have been an acceptable practice for families to attend such events together and allow the teaching of another adult to offer guidance to both adults and children.

Conclusion

The Scriptures referenced in the previous paragraphs reveal that God has commanded parents to take the primary role and spiritual obligation to train their children in the Word of God, the will of God, and the way of God. This responsibility is not meant to be entrusted to another even though others may assist the parents in the task. The referenced Scriptures also reveal that there is a balance between the God-given responsibilities to be the primary disciple-maker in the home and the participation of the

spiritual teachers to assist in the training of children. Therefore, it makes sense, if there was a partnership in Christ's day to the spiritual discipleship of children, then the church today may also continue this ministry as partners with the parents in the spiritual training of children and youth in the church as well. Fernando writes, "The teaching function should be extended to the church too. . . . the church provides spiritual parents to those who don't have earthly parents to perform the task. This can be done through the Sunday school, church Bible studies, and Sunday worship."⁶³ Fernando challenges both parents and the church to look to the needs of other children who may not have parents in their lives, or who have parents who are neglecting this responsibility. The description of the traditional family is no longer the overwhelming majority in society. The church must be ready to equip church members with the tools and resources necessary to assist the parents with their divine obligation and to teach children God's Word; there is no other viable option for the godly parent or the God-honoring church.

⁶³Fernando, *Deuteronomy*, 265.

CHAPTER 3

THE HISTORICAL FOUNDATION AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION FOR FAMILY DEVOTIONS IN THE BELIEVER'S HOME

History offers insight into the behaviors and their outcome for the church and family based upon events, resources available to them, and the choices made to address the needs or concerns of their day. Based upon the clear teachings of Scripture, God commands the parents to be the primary disciple-maker in the home. God's Word also gives insight into the direction the New Testament church moved as believers were bestowed with spiritual gifts. How then did these two elements work together historically to assist in the ministry of spiritually training adolescents in the home? A brief journey through church history will offer some insight.

A Brief Historical Review of Family Devotions

Donald S. Whitney writes, "The lives of our Christian heroes testify that God deserves to be worshiped daily in our homes by our families."¹ History records insight to the practice and convictions of church fathers throughout history. From these great men and women, the church today can gain insight to the methods that were embraced from the close of the New Testament through the twenty-first century. For example, Lyman Coleman, "a scholar of early church history, writes about family worship practice of the Christian in the decades immediately after the New Testament times: 'At an early hour in the morning the family was assembled and a portion of Scripture was read from the Old Testament, which was followed by a hymn and a prayer.'"² The amount of recorded

¹Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 28.

²Ibid., 29.

material from the early church to the reformers is limited; however, there are glimpses into the writings of church fathers that offer foundational insight to their convictions and teachings of the responsibilities of parents to disciple their children. Tertullian (c.160-225) wrote of the family worship practice in a marriage between believers, “They pray together, they worship together, they fast together; instructing one another, encouraging one another, strengthening one another.”³ If a husband and wife have established good practices in their marriage early on in their relationship, then there is hope that the same disciplines will be a part of the family as it grows through childbirth. Another church father to address family worship was John Chrysostom (c.349-407), who “urged every house should be a church, and every head of a family a spiritual shepherd, remembering the account he must give even for his children.”⁴

During the early centuries of the church-age, resources appear to be limited for the family. Even though the writings of the early church fathers may be scarce, the evidence still supports that the family was an important means of spiritual development in the home. The culture and the demands of providing for a family may have contributed to the limited role of parents in the lives of children spiritually; nonetheless, the brief writings of the church fathers reflect the importance of family worship. As the reformation period dawns, the writings and resources of the reformers becomes much more prolific. The use of training instruments and booklets became printable and reproducible. The clergy became capable of training parents, and the parents became able to disciple their children in their homes. Even though the church is still vital to the spiritual development of the family, parents will be better equipped to make disciples of their children in their homes. When the early church fathers’ era, the medieval ages, and the reformation period are compared, writings and resources become more readily

³Whitney, *Family Worship*, 29.

⁴Ibid., 30.

available for the churches and the homes as time continues to advance. Inventions such as the printing press made copies of newspapers and books much more affordable and accessible. During the Reformation period, church leaders developed, referenced, and taught from training booklets such as catechisms. Prior to the Reformation period, there is little evidence of such instruction booklets being available to families for their spiritual development in the home. Joshua C. Michael Wren Jr. writes, “If by the term ‘catechism’ one means a document in question-and-answer format designed for the direct instruction of children, no such documents were produced during the Middle Ages.”⁵ Even though no formal training documents for the family were in circulation at that time, there is evidence that curriculum was being developed for pastors for the training of the church, which would have included parents and children. As the Medieval Age arose, resources for families began to circulate. Wren also notes, “Although discipleship within the family seems to have been promoted primarily by local priests and revolved around parents and godparents teaching their children basic doctrinal statements and prayers, evidence reveals that other resources were available for some.”⁶

As history moved into the time of Puritans and Reformers, evidence of family devotions became prolific as well as accountability for such training by the parents. Several Reformers added greatly to the spiritual development of the home. Martin Luther (1483-1546) “also recognized that like any other Christian husband and father, he had the responsibility to be the worship-leading pastor of his family.”⁷ Luther believed that a key purpose to marriage was to raise godly children. This responsibility was entrusted to the father first as well as to both parents. Luther believed that the home “was to operate as an ‘earthly kingdom’ where parents train children in the commandments of God.”⁸ Another

⁵Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing, 2011), 106.

⁶Ibid., 111.

⁷Whitney, *Family Worship*, 30.

⁸Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 117.

Reformer to address family worship was John Knox (1514-1572). Knox wrote a letter to his Christian brothers in Scotland saying, “Brethren, ye are ordained of God to rule your own houses in his true fear, and according to his word . . . and therefore, I say, ye must make them partakers in reading, exhortation, and in making common prayer, which I would in every house were used once a day at least.”⁹ Prior to catechisms, Luther also identified the content of such family worship and discipleship. Luther believed that every home should be perceived as “an earthly kingdom where parents train children in the commandments of God.”¹⁰ In a short time after Luther, catechisms and confessions will be utilized in both the church and the Christian home as a means of spiritual training.

Not long after the Reformers made their impact on history, the church, and the home, the Puritans were able to build on the work of the Reformers to assist in the spiritual growth in churches and homes. Whitney writes, “The Westminster Assembly completed its work on the Confession in 1647. In August of that year the church of Scotland thought family worship so important that it created a companion document to the Westminster Confession called *The Directory for Family Worship*.”¹¹ This devotional companion made it clear that the responsibility of the father to lead his family in spiritual growth, even to the point of describing church disciplinary procedures if he neglected his God-given role.¹² If a father neglected his duties, even after being confronted, then he would be refused the rights of communion until he has repented of his neglect and embraced his duty to his family. C. Jeffrey Robinson shared, “For the Puritans, every household was to be ‘a household of faith; every father a priest in his own family.’”¹³ Steven Mintz also noted the historical standard that the Puritans embraced in their homes

⁹Whitney, *Family Worship*, 31.

¹⁰Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 117.

¹¹Whitney, *Family Worship*, 31-32.

¹²*Ibid.*, 32.

¹³Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 120.

when he wrote, “The patriarchal family was the basic building block of Puritan society, and paternal authority received strong reinforcement from the church and community.”¹⁴

There are a number of believers from the 1600’s through modern day that emphasize the need for family worship to be present in the homes of Christians. Richard Baxter (1615-1651) taught, “Solemn prayer and praise of God in and by Christian families is of divine appointment Family prayer and praises are a duty owned by the teaching and sanctifying work of the Spirit; therefore, they are of God.”¹⁵ At the turn of the eighteenth century, Matthew Henry (1662-1714), who is known for his Bible commentary, also exhorted believers to “turn your families into little churches a church in the house will be a good legacy, nay, it will be a good inheritance, to be left to your children after you.”¹⁶ Church leaders must recognize the value of spiritual discipleship in the home; since the church is made up of families, the spiritual health of the family units will have a direct impact on the spiritual health of the church. In response to Matthew Henry’s writings about family worship, Whitney wrote, “If the homes are changed through family worship, the church will be changed.”¹⁷ Another Christian who has been used by God to make an impact on the church is Jonathon Edwards (1703-1758). According to Edward’s biographer, George Marsden, he “began the day with private prayers followed by family prayers care for his children’s souls was his preeminent concern. Each meal was accompanied by household devotions, and at the end of each day Sarah [his wife] joined him in his study for prayers.”¹⁸

¹⁴Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004), 13.

¹⁵Whitney, *Family Worship*, 33.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 34-35.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 35-36.

In the nineteenth century, Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) was one of the most well-known pastors and preachers who also addressed family worship on a regular basis in his preaching and in his writings. Spurgeon wrote, “If we want to bring up a godly family. . . . let us seek to train them up in the fear of God by meeting together as a family for worship.”¹⁹ Spurgeon was one who lived at home what he proclaimed for the pulpit. Such evidence was observed by anyone who stayed with Spurgeon and his family. As the Spurgeon family hosted guests, they saw the man he was both publicly and privately. His passion for his children and his family was evident both in his writings and in his daily life.

Moving into the twentieth century, both in England and America, there are significant records that offer insight to the development of ministry both in the home and in the church. For example, Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), who served as both a pastor and author in London, wrote on family worship as a key element to his ministries. After Jones’ death, Ian Murry wrote a biography on Jones declaring, “Family prayer marked the close of every day.”²⁰ His death was a great loss to his family both in the roles of life and as the spiritual leader in the home to his family.

In America, history follows the church and the families of faith in their journey of spiritually training their children. The role of the church in training children, youth, and young adults developed resulting in specific, age-focused ministry. By the mid-twentieth century, the church began to experience age-segregated ministries and the necessary personnel to carry out the mission. Henry F. Cope wrote, “Both churches and homes are agencies of religious education. . . . As the family is the child’s first society, so the local church should be the child’s second, larger, wider society.”²¹ Cope recognized

¹⁹Whitney, *Family Worship*, 38.

²⁰Ibid., 41.

²¹Henry F. Cope, *Religious Education in the Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1917), chap. 17.

the importance of both entities working together to give spiritual guidance to adolescents. As the twentieth century progressed, societies for young adults became prevalent as well as parachurch organizations. One of the elements within the church that had significant impact on believers was the introduction of the Sunday school. Frank Erb noted that “religion and morality were the chief aims the modern Sunday school originated in the desire to teach the children of the poor to read, and sometimes to write and do arithmetic.”²² As human development of adolescents continued to be studied and understood, it resulted in numerous changes to how they are educated and raised. Not every suggestion resulted in positive fruit, but through years of evaluation, the developmental ability of children became more of a science with encouraging results. The curriculum within the church for the different ages of children also changed to implement what was discovered in human development. For example, younger children learn best through repetition and hands-on while older children develop better comprehension through repetition and memorization. Youth are able to grasp deeper concepts with the addition to discussion and reasoning. The different developmental ages revealed that children learned best through specific teaching methods. The insight to human development has enabled both church ministries and parents to disciple their children through the most effective means and methods possible by applying the age-appropriate teaching methods to children at their different stages of life.

As the movement of age-segregated ministry progressed, ministry leaders recognized an imbalance between church and home. In light of this concern, churches began to recapture a biblical, balanced approach to discipleship within the home and the partnership of the church with the parents. Timothy Paul Jones wrote, “Leaders . . . have recognized that a few hours in church each week are insufficient to train children and youth. . . . Churches must partner with mothers and fathers so that parents learn to make

²²Frank Otis Erb, *The Development of the Young People's Movement* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1917), 15.

the most of these hours.”²³ While many denominational churches and parachurch organizations are beginning to restore the balance between church and home, there were some denominations that resisted the original age-segregated movement. Mark Senter wrote, “Resisting the temptation to create a niche for young people, Mennonite churches wanted to incorporate their youth into every aspect of church life. Some even wanted young people included in denominational offices and as elders in local churches.”²⁴

As the twenty-first century arose, numerous preachers affirmed the need for family devotions in the home. Don Carson (b.1946), a New Testament scholar, affirms the need for families to commit to a family worship time. He encourages parents to create a pattern for the home that encourages Bible reading and prayer beyond the grace at meals. He encourages both individual and corporate devotions within the home, and believes that “as a family we daily seek God’s face.”²⁵ Another current proponent for family worship is John Piper (b.1946). Even though the mentality of modern men may be that of discouragement or inability, Piper does not give way to such notions. He emphasizes repeatedly the critical need for parents to rise above their circumstances to embrace their God-given responsibility to disciple their children in the home. Piper wrote, “You have to decide how important you think these family moments are. It is possible – for little ones and teenagers and parents. You may have to work at it. But it can be done.”²⁶

In the twenty-first century, the church not only recognized the imbalance in age-segregated ministries, but also began to implement strategies to return to a more balanced and biblical approach to training children. The call for parents to embrace their God-given responsibility to be the primary disciple-maker in the life of their children was

²³Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 159.

²⁴Mark H. Senter III, *When God Shows Up* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 249.

²⁵Whitney, *Family Worship*, 42.

²⁶Ibid.

supported by a number of resources helping churches equip parents. One such ministry that has grown out of this need has become known as “D6.” D6 stands for Deuteronomy 6, where God instructs Moses and the people of Israel to purposely teach their children the principles of God in everyday life. Wayne Rice writes, “The spiritual formation of children wasn’t reserved for the Sabbath day or for special times of corporate worship; it was to take place in the daily routines of life and home.”²⁷ The call to return to a biblical approach to training children in the home has led a number of pastors and scholars to study, evaluate, and write about different models of family ministry that currently exist in the church.

A Brief Historical Review of Catechesis

J. I. Packer and Gary Parrett assembled a historical work that focused on the historical record and continual need for application of catechesis in the life of the church and the Christian home. Parrett writes that “catechesis flourished between the second and fifth centuries in the ancient church. . . . Luther restored the office of catechist to the church . . . and entire congregations were instructed through unapologetically catechetical preaching, regular catechizing of children in Sunday worship, and, in many cases, through the renewed practice of congregational singing of psalms and hymns.”²⁸ Catechesis can simply be defined as “the process of teaching.”²⁹ The depth of understanding and applying catechesis goes beyond the simplicity of its definition. The process of instructing involves a qualified teacher who is committed to the system of asking specific questions and accepting very detailed answers that are grounded upon Scripture. The method of question and answer has been adopted by numerous systems of

²⁷Wayne Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry [Again]* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 167.

²⁸J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010), 22-23.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 27.

instruction over time, but the church has embraced its own form to help teach doctrine and define biblical practices within its congregation. Parrett writes, “Catechesis is the church’s ministry of grounding and growing God’s people in the Gospel and its implications for doctrine, devotion, duty, and delight.”³⁰ Packer and Parrett present the argument that catechesis is founded in the teachings of the Old and New Testaments as well as the historical record of the early church. They offer numerous passages that support the method of purposeful teaching as well as various Scriptures that the terms for teaching and instruction are found in both testaments.³¹ What is extremely helpful is the historical record that the authors present to help defend their position that the ancient church embraced this method of training.

The argument for development of catechesis is developed from the differences between the first-century converts and the expansion of the gospel. Catechesis became a tool that was introduced when a person made a profession of faith and prior to following in baptism and Lord’s Supper. Once a person had completed the required training, then the church would schedule baptism for the growing believer. Questions arose when the practice of the early church was different than what was described in the book of Acts. It appears, in the initial expansion of the gospel, when a person made a profession of faith that they also followed immediately in baptism.³² The argument to explain the new practice is that the converts of Acts had a basic understanding of the Jewish religion, and converting to Christianity was not so radical. As the gospel expanded, however, the new converts were less familiar with the God of the Jews, and therefore, needed further training prior to observing the church ordinances. Catechisms and interviews were utilized “to discern both their current spiritual condition and motives for wanting to join

³⁰Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 29.

³¹Ibid., 33-50. (Chap. 2 covers numerous biblical examples as support.)

³²Scriptures where professions of faith and immediate baptism took place are as follows: Acts 2 at Pentecost, Acts 10 at Cornelius house, Acts 16 with the Ethiopian, and Acts 17 at Ephesus.

the church. . . . the catechumens were regarded as Christian believers of sorts already, but not yet counted fully among the faithful.”³³ This reasoning has been accepted by some and has been challenged by others. Either the believer is a child of God or he/she is not. There is no support in God’s Word that they are “believers of sort.” The process of catechesis was utilized to train new converts and to train children in the homes of believers; however, it also became a prerequisite for the ordinances. There are several Scriptures that warn of false or empty professions, such as the parable of the sower and the troubles the Apostle Paul encountered with wolves in sheep’s clothing, but the requirement for catechesis was adopted by the early church with good motives and intentions standing upon numerous Scriptures requiring the training of God’s people.³⁴

Packer and Parrett present their sources for their belief that catechesis was active in the ancient church in the second through fifth century when they wrote, “Our knowledge of the catechetical practices of this age is drawn from a variety of sources. These include early catechetical manuals or other documents, such as the late first-or early second- century *Didache of the Apostles*, Irenaeus’ *Demonstration of the Apostolic Teaching*, and the third-century *The Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus.”³⁵ The authors offer numerous other examples of writing and lectures from several ancient church fathers and teachers to support their argument that catechesis was active in the early church.³⁶ Even though such evidence is offered, it does not validate catechesis to be a prerequisite for ordinances of the church. Packer and Parrett also identified that “Scripture must hold fundamental and inviolable primacy in matter of faith and practice, over and against the often distorted and distorting traditions of the institutional church.

³³Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 54.

³⁴Matt 7:15-16 warns of false prophets and teachers; Rom 16:17-27 warns against those who cause dissention in the church.

³⁵Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 53.

³⁶*Ibid.*

The ancient fathers were not always correct, either, and their teachings must also be judged in the light of the Scriptures.”³⁷ Even though the authors were addressing such practices and teachings as infant baptism, their statement is applicable to all areas of teaching and practice. Catecheses, or methods similar, are powerful tools to train God’s people or to educate those in Christian homes, but it will be difficult to prove that such methods should be requirements for observing ordinances. It appears that from the end of the fifth century until the reformation, that catechesis was lost in the regular practice of both church and home; however, under the leadership of Luther, the method of training both the church and the children was recaptured and restored. C. Michael Wren Jr., also addresses that Thomas Aquinas developed an instructional guide for the clergy which allowed the unlearned to be taught in greater detail as people came to Christ through conversion. Wren believes that “Thomas articulated an important place for the education of children.”³⁸ Even John Calvin was quoted as saying, “Believe me . . . the Church of God will never be preserved without catechesis.”³⁹

A Review of Contemporary Models of Family Ministry in the Church

One of the leading contemporary researchers and authors of family ministry is Timothy Paul Jones. His passions for the church and for family are sure and visible. Over the past ten years, he has written and spoken extensively on the subject of family ministry, enabling him to have numerous conversations with other pastors who were on the leading edge of restoring the responsibility of family ministry back to the parents. Jones defines family ministry as “the process of intentionally and persistently realigning a congregation’s proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as the persons primarily responsible for the discipleship of their

³⁷Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 60.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹*Ibid.*, 51.

children.”⁴⁰ Even though Jones is open to discuss the definition submitted, he has offered a strong, biblical approach to how family ministry should be understood by professing believers and church leaders. In his research, Jones has discovered that there are numerous models of family ministry within the church and home; however, he has been able to consolidate the models into four major categories.

The first category reflects the movement that had risen towards the end of the twentieth century with age-segregated ministry called the Programmatic Ministry Model. This method is best understood as focusing on programs, events, and numbers. There is no doubt that the model had a powerful impact on youth back in the eighties and nineties; however, the main concern had arisen when those teenagers became young adults and became lost in a sea of relativism and political correctness. There were numerous surveys and conversations that supported the fact that the church member drop-out rate had risen significantly post high school. Unfortunately, some of the quoted statistics were not meant to be considered as a norm across the nation, rather they were the experience of youth ministers in specific congregations. Their numbers were not meant to become the average for all churches across America. In addition, few studies verified the return rate of those same drop-outs. When these numbers were re-introduced back into the active church member scenario, the drop-out rate decreased drastically as well.⁴¹

As society became more concerned about children and youth, the church also followed suite and began to develop ministry models that focused on specific age groups. Church ministry began to target children, youth, young adults, and families with children. The church believed that in order to meet the need of the different age groups within the church, staff needed to expand as well to offer quality programs to minister to the different groups. Unfortunately, one of the unintended results was the idea that professional youth

⁴⁰Paul Renfro, Brandon Shields, and Jay Strother, *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville, TN: B&H Academics, 2009), 40.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 101-6.

and children ministers could and should minister better to adolescents rather than the parents. Replacing the parents was never the purpose of programmatic ministry even though it is a side-effect of it. The program-driven model had the ability to draw in numbers of attenders. Churches that had the reputation of having successful children and youth ministries also had the benefit of families with young children attending. Churches that were smaller, or were unable to afford children or youth directors, struggled to attract the same numbers of families. Part of this reality was due to the consumer mentality that has over-taken the church. Society has trained the public to go where you can get the best deal and to find a place to cater to the individual's specific needs and preferences. This mentality has greatly impacted the heart of believers as they sought out churches for their families. Churches were losing the image of community-based churches, and were quickly becoming commuter-based churches. Families would drive by dozens of solid Bible-based, Gospel preaching churches in order to attend the church of their preference. The days of churches being filled by their communities had changed to memberships consisting of choice and felt-needs. The consumer mentality had bled into the church, and the children and youth ministries were vital in drawing families to their congregations.

The programmatic model focused on events and numbers as well as evangelism, spiritual growth, ministry, and missions. Part of the challenge arose from a changing home life. As the baby-boomer generation became adults, they did not have the same conviction to faith as their parents. Baby-boomer parents became less involved in the spiritual development of their children, and many could even be relieved that someone else was responsible for the task of making disciples out of their children and youth. For the parents that gladly welcomed the new youth professional into the spiritual development of the teenager, it opened the door for a changing of the guard. Parents stepped aside to allow the church with its youth ministers and youth volunteers to take the lead role of training their children; this is an unfortunate consequence of a potentially effective ministry that came on the scene at a transitioning time in the American culture.

Rather than the new focus on age-graded ministry accompanying the parents, in many situations, it replaced the parents. As a result, the church needed to evaluate the programmatic model and move in a different direction.

The second family ministry model is called the Family-Integrated Ministry Model. This method of family ministry is the most radical of all the models. This approach is also known as the “family-driven or family-discipleship approach.”⁴² According to Jones, “all age-graded classes and events are eliminated, generations learn and worship together, and parents bear the primary responsibility for the evangelism and discipleship of their children.”⁴³ This approach to family ministry removes all age-graded segregation and returns to a more early-church method. Since the focus of children ministries and youth ministries did not rise until the twentieth century, the church functioned differently prior to the programmatic approach arriving. The family-integrated method focuses on training the parents, grandparents, and legal guardians to be the primary disciple makers in the home. In many settings, the focus is accompanied by accountability as well. Church leaders will invest in training parents, in some cases, specifically the husbands and fathers, and will have a system of accountability in place in order to keep each other on the right path and committed to training their families. There are no age-segregated Bible studies in this approach, but rather families are paired together for Bible study times. The entire family worships and learns together in all settings. In some settings, church leadership will offer training for the husbands and fathers on Sunday nights to equip them for the week of discipleship ahead. Renfro writes, “each month, the men’s meeting gather with the distinct goal of training men to be spiritual leaders.”⁴⁴ The family-integrated model clearly declares their break from all age-segregated ministry, and they make no apologies for the purposeful lack of youth

⁴²Renfro, Shields, and Strother, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 42.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., 56.

ministers, children ministries, or nurseries. The family-integrated model publicly declares, “we reject the church’s implementation of modern individualism by fragmenting the family through age-graded, peer-oriented, and special-interest classes, thus preventing rather than promoting family unity.”⁴⁵

The third family ministry model is called the Family-Based Ministry Model. This method has the least amount of change from the programmatic model as compared to the other family-ministry models. The focus of the family-based method is a combination of age-segregated ministry while attempting to involve different generations into the events. Jones writes that “each ministry sponsors events and learning experiences that are intentionally designed to draw generations together.”⁴⁶ This method allows for continued age-segregated ministry while purposely and creatively allowing the parents and grandparents to be involved in multi-generational ministry. This approach supports the parents’ role of being the primary disciple makers in the homes, and it offers church ministry opportunities to take on the leadership mantle while allowing youth and children to still develop and grow at their level and pace. Jones utilizes the picture of a sunflower to help explain the imagery of the family-based ministry approach: “Each petal remains separate, yet all the petals come together at the central disk. In the same way, each ministry in a family-based congregation remains separate. Central to the congregations’ mission, however, is the expectation that every ministry will consistently plan events and learning experiences that draw families and generations together.”⁴⁷ Brandon Shields believes that age segregation is not the problem. Therefore, Shields describes family-based congregations as “churches that retain separate, age-segregated ministry structures. The difference between family-based models and typical programmatic models is that family-based churches intentionally included intergenerational and family-focused events

⁴⁵Renfro, Shields, and Strother, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 55.

⁴⁶Ibid., 43.

⁴⁷Ibid.

in each ministry.”⁴⁸ Shields challenges the accumulation and the use of statistics to misguide people to believe that the programmatic approach is a complete failure. He believes that the numbers are more encouraging when the big picture of drop-outs and returns are included and properly evaluated. Shields will argue that family-based ministry is not activity driven, nor should it unigenerational ministry, or that it is culturally immersed.⁴⁹ Shields believes that the family-based ministry model is strong in evangelism, multi-generational involvement, and kingdom-minded emphasis.⁵⁰

The fourth family ministry model is called the Family-Equipping Ministry Model. This method seeks to empower parents to be the primary spiritual leaders in the home while the church embraces its role to equip the parents for their God-given task. Jones identifies this model as a family-empowering approach. He writes, “Church leaders plan every ministry to champion the place of parents as primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives.”⁵¹ This approach does not purposely remove the age-segregated ministries, and even allows for youth and children ministers to staff employed. The family-equipping model is purposeful as it empowers the parents to disciple their children at every stage of development and spiritual growth. Jones also writes that the “family-equipping ministry reworks the church’s entire structure to call parents to disciple their children at every level of the church’s work.”⁵² Jay Strother is a strong supporter of the family-equipping model, and he seeks “to partner with parents at every level of ministry so that parents are acknowledged, equipped, and held accountable for the discipleship of their children.”⁵³ Strother has developed a paradigm that focuses on the development of

⁴⁸Renfro, Shields, and Strother, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 100.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 108-10.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 114-17.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 43.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 44.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 144.

children that defines the catalysts, the content, and the context that helps spiritually develop every child while equipping and engaging the parents in the process as the primary disciple-maker.⁵⁴ His intentional plan includes an age-segregated approach to development that recognizes the need for different foundations as well as progressing learning abilities at the different ages. Jones and Strother identify the parent as the primary disciple-maker with the church assisting the parents, not replacing them. Jones offers the analogy of a river to help envision the family-equipping model.⁵⁵ The river itself is the life and development of the child. On either side of the river are the river banks. One represents the parents and the other represents the church. Both banks are needed to help direct and flow of the river. Such is the role of the church as it aids the parents in their God-given responsibility to disciple their children in the way and truth of God's Word.

Conclusion

Throughout church history, there is evidence of many different approaches to ministry for the family. There is evidence of neglect as well as evidence of renewed focus and vigor. The Word of God is equally clear that the divine Creator has charged the parents to purposely train their children the Word of God as well as how to walk in the ways of God. As the New Testament demonstrates, God has gifted and empowered the church to take up the mantle of teaching. The powerful command to disciple the family is assisted by the insights of child development. As children grow and develop, they learn best through different educational means. Therefore, it is reasonable and responsible to understand the developmental stages of children and employ those insights into both family devotions and church ministry.

⁵⁴Renfro, Shields, and Strother, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 149.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 44-45.

As a reminder, Timothy Paul Jones offers a powerful definition of family ministry when he writes, “Family ministry is the process of intentionally and persistently coordinating a congregation’s proclamation and practices so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives.”⁵⁶ C. Jeffrey Robinson Sr. quoted a work from Luther when he wrote, “The household was to operate as an earthly kingdom where parents train children in the commandments of God.”⁵⁷ Robinson then quotes from the puritan Richard Baxter, “For the Puritans, every household was to be a household of faith; every father a priest in his own family.”⁵⁸ There is no doubt that the spiritual growth of the family was a concern for all ages in church history; however, family devotions may have been a greater emphasis of the church at one moment in history as compared to another. Even as the subject of family discipleship continues as a primary discussion in the church in modern times by contemporary preachers and authors, David Prince added to the discussion, “Fathers are called to be pastors in their homes . . . every father is called to serve as a shepherd in his home.”⁵⁹ In his contribution to *Trained in the Fear of God*, Prince quotes from another contemporary D.A. Carson when he writes, “Scripture also draws parallels between the responsibility of Christian fathers to pastor their families and the responsibility of called men to shepherd the local church.”⁶⁰ Peter R. Schemm Jr. offers valuable insight into the practical application of family devotions. He describes in detail numerous steps in implementing a simple and effective system for family devotions. As he draws his contribution to a conclusion, Schemm writes, “I want to conclude with a reminder of the ultimate goal of the Christian household. We practice these habits together because we

⁵⁶Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 15.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 117.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 120.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 165.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 167.

long for gospel-centered relationships where the grace of God is rehearsed in our households.’⁶¹

Even though each family-ministry model has strengths and perceived weaknesses (depending on who is asked), the model that is recommended for this project will be the family-equipping model. This model stresses a balance between the God-given role to the parents as the primary disciple-makers in the home as well as the churches role with it Spirit-given gifts to help teach God’s Word. It emphasizes vital importance of parents being equipped to do equipping at home. The church has a responsibility to teach God’s Word and to equip God’s people. The family-equipping model seeks to take the strengths of the programmatic model and bring youth and children ministry back to a biblical foundation empowering the parent as the primary disciple-maker. As Christian parents seek to draw closer to God in their own lives, they will be confronted with this element at some point in their journey. It will be impossible for a parent to truly pursue godliness and Christ-likeness without addressing the issue of family devotions. Discipleship within the home is not optional, but rather it is required. May Schemm’s ultimate goal be the goal of every Christian home as they seek to obey and embrace their God-given role as primary disciple-makers in the home and thus begin a journey for their children that will initiate the journey of developing a spiritual legacy in the generations to come.

⁶¹Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 191.

CHAPTER 4

THE PREPARATION AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FAMILY WORSHIP PROJECT AT BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH

The planning and development of the six-week sermon series on family worship within the home and the thirteen-week family devotional guide were both enjoyable and challenging due to the daily responsibilities within the church and home; nonetheless, the entire project was insightful and enjoyable to develop and deliver. The preparation for the sermon series took approximately eight weeks. The first two weeks were dedicated to developing an overall approach to the messages followed by a week of sermon preparation for each text. The planning and development of the Family Devotional Guide (FDG) took approximately twelve weeks. The first two weeks were dedicated to developing a rough draft of the elements of the daily devotionals. Approximately every two weeks, each of the elements would be developed and included in the devotional rough draft. The final two weeks, just prior to starting the sermon series, I brought a rough draft home to begin utilizing in my own family to help discern any adjustments that may be needed before making the final copy available to the members at BBC.

Another element that required time was the process to identify and select eligible church members for the surveys. With the assistance of the church secretary, I was able to draw from a list of families at BBC that have children in our youth or children programs, and then was able to develop the letters that would ask for their participation in the process by completing the surveys as they arrived. The analysis of the surveys was also insightful to determine if the sermon series increased Bible knowledge

in the life of each of the families and to encourage them to establish family devotions within the home.

The final element of the project was the invitation to the three professionals to assist in the evaluation of the sermon series and the family devotional guide. The analysis of the professionals' evaluation forms also assisted me in a deeper understanding of the sermons and the devotional guide.

Preparations of the Sermon Series

The sermon series is an exegetical study of key biblical passages in the family worship project. The purpose of the sermon series is to preach on each of the key passages that have been focused on within the family worship project as well as incorporate practical application to the families that attend the sermon series. To initiate the process, each of the five passages that will be the single focus for each of the first five sermons, and then the sixth message will be a summary of the key passages and the explanation and distribution of the Family Devotional Guide.

As the first week of sermon preparation began, I spent time praying over my study Bible and a blank pad of paper. My prayer was a time of confession and purification of my mind and heart so that as I began to prepare the sermons that I would not be a hindrance to leading of the Holy Spirit. My prayer was a time to declare my full dependence upon God to understand the text and for leading to develop a message that would pierce my own heart and the hearts of those in the church.

After my prayer time concluded, I simply wrote the five key passages at the top of the first page: Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 78, Proverbs 22, Ephesians 6, and Joshua 24. I then took each of these passages and wrote them on their own pages with the intent of studying each passage separately and beginning the process to exegete each text. The sixth message would be a summary of the key points of the five messages as well as practical explanation of the Family Devotional Guide. On the first page, I wrote a temporary title next to each passage with the full understanding that the final title would

be amended as the messages were developed. With excitement, I began the process of prayerfully studying each text, making notes of key words and phrases, and then diving into the joy of word studies. Upon the conclusion of my studies, I began to review the commentators that I referenced in chapter two of this project, and then continued to consult additional commentators for further insight.

As my weekly responsibilities had an impact on my additional sermon studies, I sought to develop one family worship sermon per week. At the end of approximately eight weeks, I have a strong rough draft for each of the first five sermons. The sixth sermon developed into three parts. In the first section, I would summarize the key points of each of the first five messages, in the second section, I invited one of our church families to share their personal testimony about how they have been practicing family devotions for years, and the final section was the introduction to the Family Devotional Guide. By the end of the tenth week, each message outline was developed, the titles were reworked, the illustrations were added, and the application was still being fine-tuned to complete the Family Worship Sermon Series.¹ As the dates approached for the sermon series to be delivered at Bethlehem Baptist Church, I continued to pray over and read through the messages, all along asking the Spirit of God to lead in the finalization of the message, even up to the very morning of each Sunday message's delivery. Each week, as I prepared to step into the pulpit, I was passionate about being prepared, prayed up, and ready to deliver God's Word to help establish family devotions in the home. As a part of my prayer time, I was asking God to utilize these messages in my life as well as those who will be in attendance each Sunday that they are delivered. In all matters, I desired to be true to God's Word, to be clear and passionate about His truth, to challenge and encourage the people to reflect on the Scriptures, and to bring glory to God.

¹See appendix 6.

Development of the Family Devotion Guide

The process to develop the Family Devotional Guide was a new experience for me.² Years ago, I was greatly blessed by Terry Johnson with his family worship resource book, and it was an inspiration to me to develop my guide.³ As I contemplated the elements of the guide, it went through several drafts. It had to be simple, effective, and yet also include elements of challenge. I wanted God’s Word to saturate the entire project, so that the families would be blessed through the reading and discussion of Scripture. The final draft resulted in having the following sections: Bible reading, Bible memorization, Bible principle, Bible discussion, and prayer. The guide was designed to be utilized daily for a period of thirteen weeks.

The Bible memorization was designed to help families learn a portion of Scripture each week. The parents were encouraged to utilize different methods of helping children of all ages learn the selected passages together as a family. The passages selected were of my own choosing, hoping to include key passages about God, Jesus Christ, Salvation, the Lord’s Prayer, and Christian living. At times, the passages were so lengthy, that the entirety of the passage would be divided up over two or three weeks.

The Bible principles were a form of catechisms. Two principles were the focus for an entire week. The catechisms chosen were not in complete order as presented in many of the prepared texts, but they were personally selected utilizing Terry Johnson’s family worship resource book. The Bible principles would also run the entire thirteen weeks in conjunction with the devotional guide. I chose the term “Bible Principle” to help avoid any challenges that would arise from preconceived notions with catechisms and other denominations or religions. As a part of the instructions regarding Bible principles and Bible memorization, I encouraged the families to review previous sections

²See appendix 7. (A two-week portion of the guide and the resource page are provided.)

³Terry Johnson, *The Family Worship Book: A Resource Book for Family Devotions* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1998).

from the prior weeks to help the children retain what they have learned so that the Word of God may truly be hidden and treasured within their hearts.

Next, I began the process of selecting the Bible reading passages. To begin, I simply walked through the New Testament, starting in the gospels, and began to make a notation of chapters that had content that would be easily understood by children with the aid of their parent or guardian. I had to keep in mind that there were families that were being prayerfully selected for the surveys that had little Bible knowledge, so I did not want this devotional guide to frustrate or discourage families that were considering starting family devotions. It was very easy to select a different chapter of reading for the thirteen-week devotional resulting in ninety-one different chapters of both the New and Old Testaments. In the instructions, the families were encouraged to either read the entire chapter as a part of their family devotions, or they could focus on a portion of Scripture that was noted from within each chapter. The purpose for the focus passage was to assist with the discussion questions for the family after the reading was completed. The instruction page also recommended allowing the children to assist in reading the Bible for their own personal experience and participating in the devotion time.

The Bible discussion section was designed to be a time when the parents would initiate conversation to discern the comprehension of the children and to springboard into unplanned spiritual conversations. Each Bible reading passage was accompanied by two or three questions that would help engage in further conversations between the family members. The questions were drawn directly from the focus passages, and the answers were identified by the specific verse in parenthesis where it could be found.

Finally, each daily devotional had a closing prayer section. There were two options on how to utilize this time. One option was that the family simply had the option to take prayer requests from each other and then to take turns praying. This was an opportunity where the children could help lead prayer with the parent, or that the child could close the family devotion time in prayer all by themselves. The other option

included the an acronym A.C.T.S. (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication) as a guide for a more engaging prayer time.

Once the devotional was assembled, one of the final steps was to develop an instruction page to help introduce each section and to offer suggestions how to utilize each element. The instructions suggest setting aside ten to fifteen minutes each day in order to have sufficient time to initiate a family devotion time. The instructions also offer suggestions on how to help children of different ages to learn and memorize Scripture. Three different approaches to Scripture memory were suggested and demonstrated for their consideration. Another element included in the guide was “Family Resource” page. This resource page was meant to offer suggestions for further reading about and additional tools for family devotions. The final element of the guide was to make the formatting uniform for each day as well as developing a very simple cover page. The guides were printed and stapled ready to be distributed near the conclusion of the sermon series.

Selection of Professionals for Evaluations and Families for Surveys

In order to satisfy the goals set for the family worship project, I invited three professionals to participate in the evaluation process of the sermon series and the family devotional guide. With joy, David Chrisman, Frank James, and David Jackson agreed to assist. Each week, prior to the sermon, a manuscript and a sermon evaluation form were delivered to each professional so that they could preview the message in manuscript form and be prepared to evaluate the content and the delivery.

The same three professionals also were given a completed Family Devotion Guide with the evaluation form so that they could preview the tool and have time to consider their evaluations. The forms were designed to be anonymous, and the professionals were encouraged to utilize my mail box in the church office to return the completed forms.

The selection of the church families for the surveys was an interesting process. Bethlehem is blessed to have families with children; however, the number of these families is limited. Bethlehem is an aging church with a high population of senior adults; therefore, at the time of the implementation of the project, there were only about twenty-five families to contact for the participation of the surveys. Three mailings occurred to introduce the project, asking for their participation in the surveys by three different letters.⁴ Each letter was sent to twenty-three families within the church that had children living at home. The first letter was sent one month prior to the first message of the sermon series, and it included an introduction about the family worship project and the request for their participation. It was accompanied by the Family Discipleship Practice Survey, as well as a pre-stamped, pre-addressed return envelope. The second letter was sent two weeks before the sermon series began, and it also had a pre-stamped, pre-addressed return envelope as well as the pre-test survey. Upon completion of the sermon series, the third and final letter was sent, with the pre-stamped, pre-addressed return envelope and the post-test survey. The return on the survey forms was encouraging with the first survey, but with each subsequent survey, fewer families responded.

Implementation of Sermon Series and Family Devotion Guide

One of the great joys of the project was the development and delivery of the sermon series. Taking time to study specific Bible passages for the purpose of creating a sermon outline is usually enjoyable, but adding this process to an already full schedule with full-time ministry responsibilities, weekly sermon development, pastoral care, and typical family life added tension to the studies; however, as each message began to take form, the process was still a great joy. The outlines to shape, the support Scriptures we added, and the illustrations assisted in bringing the entirety of the sermon preparation to

⁴See appendix 5.

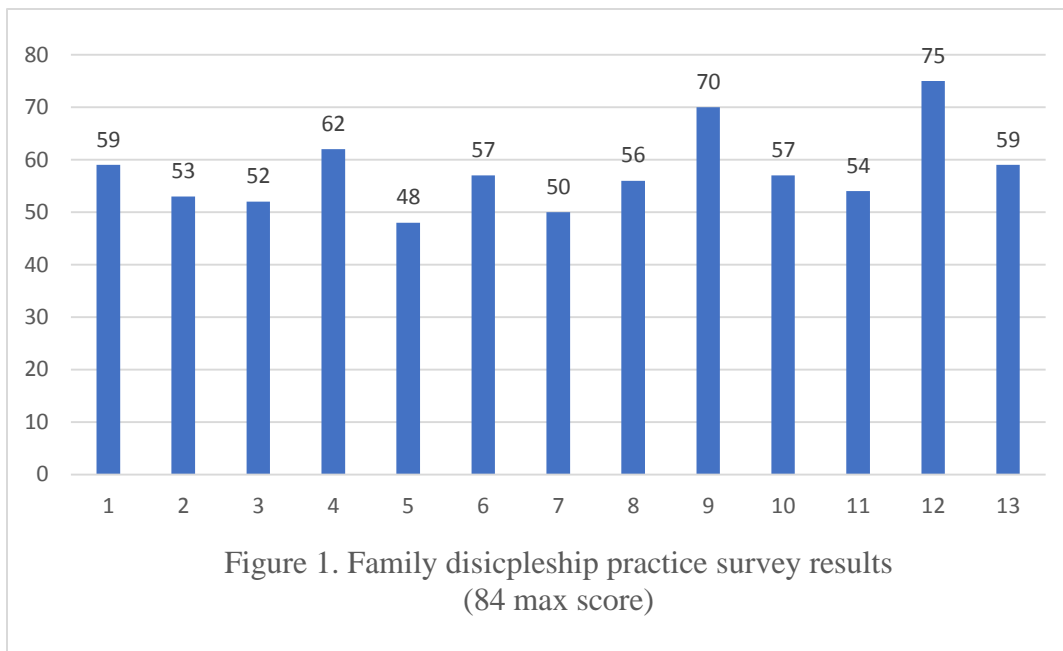
completion. The final element was the application of the messages to a congregation that has vast variety. The ages of those present in the worship service range from twelve years old to ninety-two years old. The family make up was equally vast, and so the application included encouraging people to have a personal time of Bible reading as well as establishing a family time of worship. The emphasis each week focused on the priority of God's Word in our daily lives and our families.

Another joy was the full experience in developing the family devotion guide as well as personally utilizing the guide with my own family. Over time, numerous devotional guides have made a positive impact on my own life and have been a blessing to our family. When I began the planning stage of the devotional guide, the initial outline went through several alterations. The elements that would have been included were reworked to develop an approach that would help families at BBC establish and maintain a daily time of family worship. Bible reading, discussion, and prayer were the starting points in the elements of the guide, followed by the addition of Scripture memory. The final element included was the Bible principles (or catechisms) as a means of learning Bible doctrine. One element that was initially considered, and personally attempted within my own family, was the element of music. The final decision was to exclude music a portion of the guide because most of families with children at BBC would not feel as comfortable leading their family in this discipline. I summarized that the final elements would be sufficient to help establish and maintain family worship; however, in several of the messages, singing hymns were verbally mentioned as options of expanding and personalizing the worship time to reflect the personality of each family.

Analysis of Survey and Evaluation Data

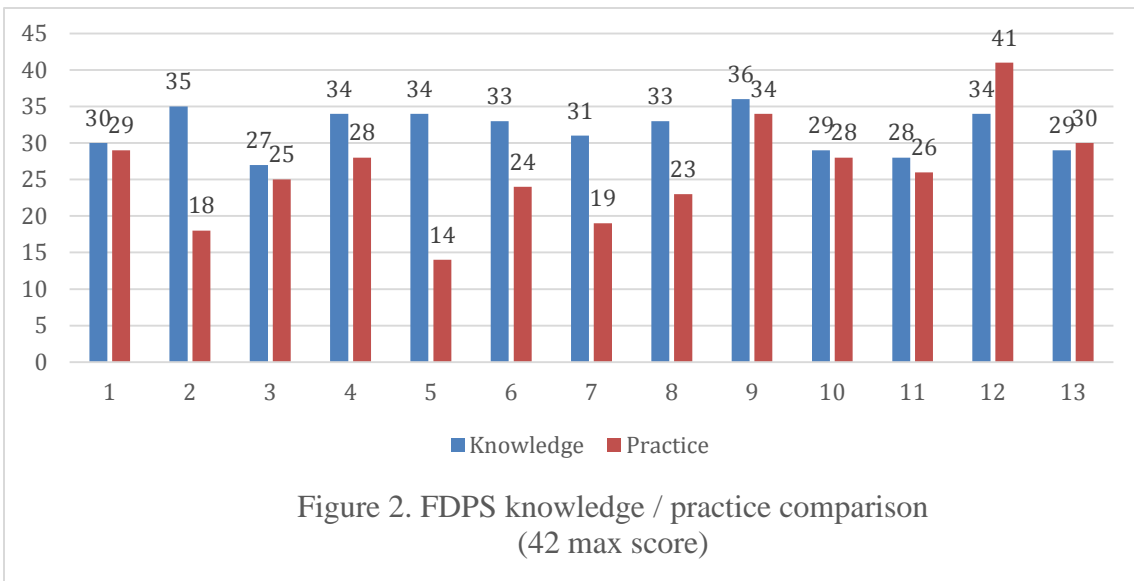
The collection and analysis of data through the surveys and evaluations has been very insightful to the entire process, including the development, the delivery, and the practical application of the sermon series and family devotional guide.

Family discipleship practice survey results. The FDPS is a sixteen-question tool utilizing a Likert-scale six-point measuring system. The survey allowed for the participants to respond to statements that would evaluate their Bible knowledge and their current discipleship practices focusing on family worship within the home. The survey was mailed to twenty-three families within the BBC membership, and a total of thirteen surveys were completed and returned. The max score for the entire survey is eighty-four points. As a combined score of both Bible knowledge and current discipleship practice, the thirteen families that responded scored ranging from a high of seventy-five points and a low of fifty points. From a percentage perspective, there were no total scores in the 100 to 91 percentages, there were two scores in the 90 to 81 percentages, there were three scores in the 80 to 71 percentages, that were six scores in the 70 to 61 percentages, and there were two scores in the 60 and below percentages.



In addition to the overall scores and percentages, the FDPS also revealed a difference between the Bible knowledge and the current discipleship practices within the homes at BBC. The comparison of knowledge and practice reveal that the Bible

knowledge was established to a good to excellent degree; however, the application of that knowledge was not as well established in the practice of family devotions or worship practices. The following chart revealed a definite difference between knowing and practicing. The total for the Bible knowledge is forty-two points, and several of the families scored well ranging from a high of thirty-six points with only a few families scoring in the upper twenties to a low of twenty-seven points. The difference was noticeable when the discipleship practices were analyzed. Only two of the thirteen families had strong practices than their declared Bible knowledge, and the other eleven families had a decrease in their practices. The discipleship practice survey also had a max score of forty-two points, and the scores ranged from a high of forty-one to a low of fourteen. The analysis of the FDPS reveals that even though the families had a good foundation of Bible knowledge in the realm of family worship, yet the application and practice of the knowledge needed strengthening.



Family worship Bible knowledge T-test results. The same twenty-three families that receive the FDPS also received The Family Worship Sermon Series Survey

(FWSSS). Out of the twenty-three families, eleven families completed and returned the pre-and-post surveys. Based upon the analysis of the results, there was a noticeable increase in the means; the Bible knowledge before the sermon series totaled 67.64 points out of a max score of seventy-two. The Bible knowledge increased to a total of 71.18 after the six-week sermon series was presented to the BBC on Sunday mornings during the main worship service. Of the eleven completed surveys, seven families revealed an increase in Bible knowledge regarding family worship and four families remained the same as prior to the sermon series. There were no families that identified any decrease in their Bible knowledge after the teaching series was completed.

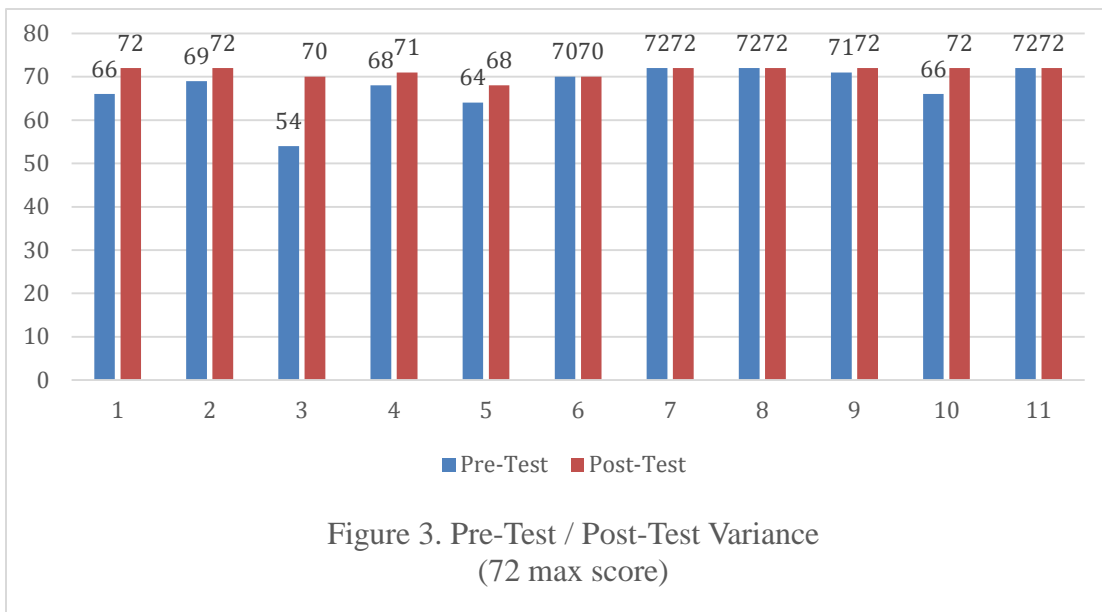
Next, based upon the data analysis, the teaching of the doctrine to the select group of medium adults at BBC made a statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of their Bible knowledge ($t_{(10)} = 2.481, p < .032$). The absolute value of the t Stat is 2.481; the critical 2 tail variable is 2.228. The result is an increase in Bible knowledge.

Table 1. T-test: paired two sample for means

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	67.63636364	71.18181818
Variance	28.05454545	1.763636364
Observations	11	11
Pearson Correlation	0.522134679	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	10	
t Stat	-2.480506525	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.016257304	
t Critical one-tail	1.812461123	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.032514608	
t Critical two-tail	2.228138852	

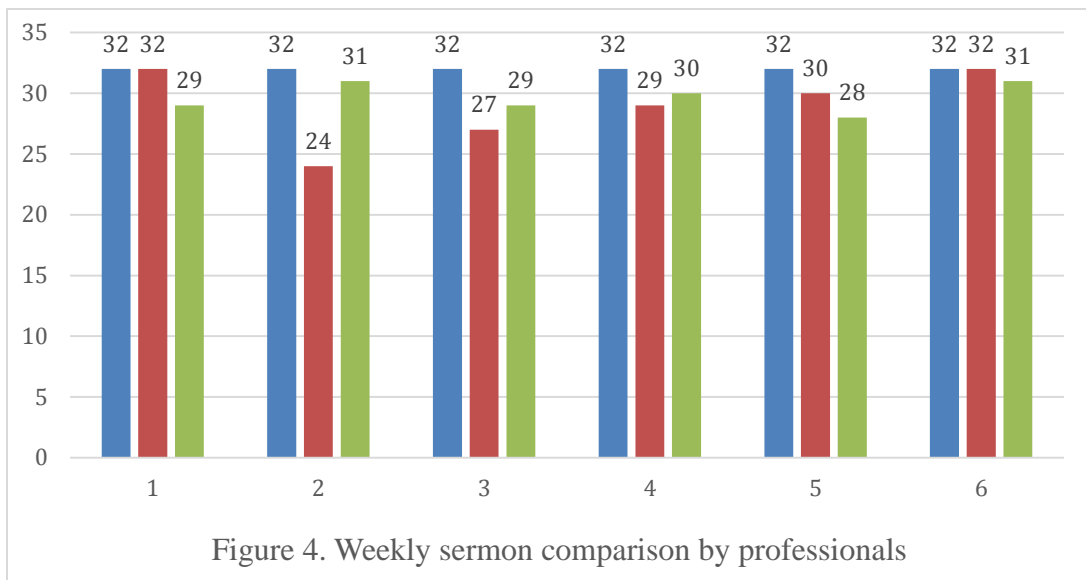
The FWSSS was designed to test the knowledge of the BBC families with children to determine if the sermon series would have an impact on their understanding of God's Word and the embrace the God-given responsibility to be the primary disciple

makers in the home. The sermon series was developed to encourage all members and guests at BBC to give God’s Word its proper place in their daily lives and in their homes. The t-test table 1 is based upon the completed responses of eleven families that took the pre-test before the first message in the sermon series and then again, the exact same survey after the final message of the sermon series. See figure 3 to compare the individual scores. In one case, there was a significant increase in Bible knowledge regarding family devotions and family worship. In four cases, the degree of knowledge could not measure as an increase due to the limit of the Likert-scale survey; therefore, those four families remained the same in Bible knowledge. There were six other families that reflected an increase in Bible knowledge based upon a comparison of their scores.



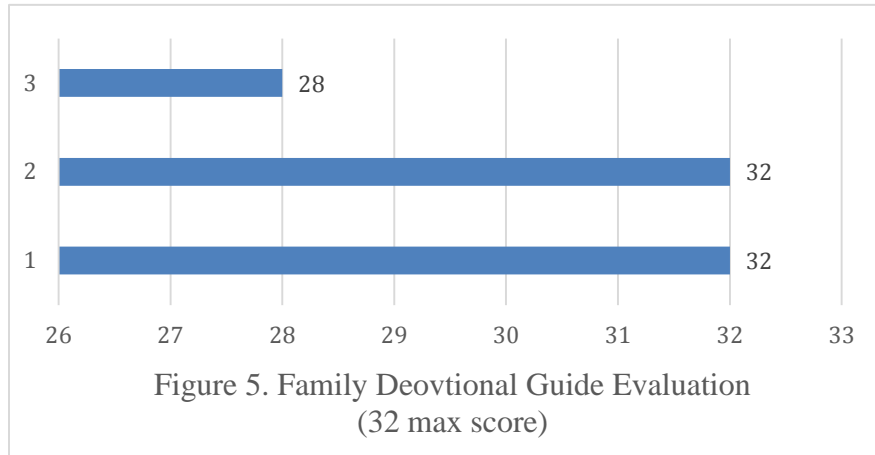
Sermon series evaluations. The six messages were evaluated by three professionals who had a combination of over ninety years of ministerial experience and over twenty-six years of formal education. Their input was valuable to the analysis of the project, the development of the sermons and devotional guide, and the insight to the relevance and application of the project. Each of the first five messages focused on one

primary passage, and the sixth message was a summary of the key passages and the instruction of the FDG. Each week, the professionals received a manuscript of the sermon and an evaluation form. Based upon their evaluations, the scores ranged from a high of ninety-five (out of a total of ninety-six points) to a low of eighty-eight. The scores transposed into percentages ranged from a 98.9 high to a 90.6 low. The percentage scores in order of each week are as follows: Week 1 – 96.8 percent, Week 2 – 90.6 percent, Week 3 – 91.6 percent, Week 4 – 94.7 percent, Week 5 – 93.7 percent, and Week 6 – 98.9 percent. The first and last weeks were scored the highest by the three ministerial professionals, and their input on the evaluation forms were encouraging and constructive. For the series as a whole, the first professional gave a gracious 192 points out of a possible 192 points; the second professional scored a total of 174 total points; and the third professional scored a total of 178 points.



Family devotional guide evaluations. The final analysis focuses on the thirteen-week FDG. The three ministerial professionals were given an evaluation form with a copy of the devotional guide. Over a period of four weeks, the professionals reviewed the FDG and returned evaluation forms with encouraging and constructive

feedback. Based upon the evaluation form, there is a max score of thirty-two points. Each of the professionals offered insight on the following criteria: Biblical faithfulness, scope, methodology, and practicality. Out of the max score of thirty-two points, the three professionals evaluated a total of eight topics with the followed totals on the FDG: 32, 32, and 28. (See figure5.)



Conclusion

The development and implementation of the project was enjoyable, insightful, and challenging. The feedback from the professionals has been constructive and helpful. The study involved in developing chapters 2 and 3 was extremely helpful in establishing a foundation and a direction for the project. The biblical and historical insight played a vital role in the development of the sermon series and the FDG. The process to develop the sermons was challenging only from the perspective of existing family and church ministry responsibilities. The development of FDG was a new experience that was challenging and helpful. The feedback from the professionals offered insight to the current project and additional thoughts for future writing projects. Overall, the full project has been a great experience for me, my family, and hopefully for BBC.

CHAPTER 5

THE EVALUATION OF THE FAMILY WORSHIP PROJECT AT BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH.

The family worship project at BBC has been a three-year project. The study and preparations of the biblical foundation overview have been wonderful elements of the project because they have given tremendous insight to the God-given responsibility to equip parents to be the primary disciple makers in the life of children. The historical overview was helpful because it granted me insight to the focus of family devotions within the home from the first century church, through the eyes of Puritans and Reformers, and through contemporary authors and preachers. The development of the sermon series was enjoyable and enriching. The verbal and written feedback from families was equally encouraging. The development of the FDG was the most rewarding element of the project due to the process to plan, create, and personally utilize it. The responses from the professionals offered great insight to the current project and to future considerations. Overall, the project was challenging, enriching, and a blessing.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose to equip parents and guardians at BBC to establish and maintain a family worship time within the home has measured a positive response. The surveys and evaluations for Bible knowledge had revealed an increase in this area in the lives of the families that participated in the project. The project seemed appropriate for the families at BBC, because numerous families have graciously testified the need within their families for devotions. Even though there were a number of families that had a good foundation of the Bible knowledge, the practical application of God's Word has increased as revealed as a true need at BBC based upon the Family Discipleship Practice Survey. The purpose

was simplified during the planning stages of chapter one; however, the completion of this project only reveals that the need for family discipleship needs further equipping at BBC. The current purpose of establishing family devotions was greatly needed and seen as a help to many at BBC, including my own family.

Evaluation of the Project's Goal

The first goal of the project to assess the current discipleship practices of the families with children at BBC was met with the assistance of the Family Discipleship Practice Survey. The survey tool utilized was insightful, determining the difference between what was known and what was practiced. The knowledge portion was above average, but the application of that knowledge needed to be strengthened in many of the families that participated in the project.

The second goal of the project to develop a six-week sermon series that would offer biblical insight and practical knowledge to develop family devotions was accomplished. The sermon series was an enjoyable process for me, as well as the preaching of God's Word to BBC. One of the challenges was making the application of family devotions relevant to the families that did not have children in the home. Therefore, the application was broad, including personal devotions, devotions between couples, family devotions, and devotions for all who have children in their lives.

The third goal of developing a thirteen-week family devotional guide was successfully met. This was the most challenging and most rewarding element of the project. I have developed a new respect for those who have developed family devotional guides in the past, and it has encouraged me to consider future writing projects that would benefit individuals and families. The exclusion of song selection was appropriate, but it also left me feeling as if I did not create a family devotional guide that included every possible element. Song selection is an element to consider for future projects. A surprising element that was included was the use of catechisms, or what I renamed as "Bible Principles" in the Family Devotional Guide. Based upon feedback, one of the

elements that I will give future consideration to is the idea of weekly themes in the selection of Bible reading, Bible principles, and Bible memorization, so that they would have a common theme rather than a vast range of topics. One way to resolve this is to utilize the recommended scriptures from the list of catechisms to be the Bible memorization for the same week. Another way to address it is to utilize the Scriptures from the catechisms for the selections of Bible reading and Bible discussion each day as well. Overall, the goal was met and extremely and personally rewarding.

The fourth goal to increase the Bible knowledge of families in regard to family worship at BBC was accomplished and verified through the assistance of the Family Worship Sermon Series Survey. Based upon the FPDS, there was an obvious need to apply the previous known Bible knowledge about family worship within the home. The hope of the project was to enlighten the individuals and families to what God requires of all believers, and to encourage them with God's Word and practical insight to help establish and maintain family devotions. With the help of families being willing to complete the Family Worship Sermon Series Survey, the increase in knowledge was measured successful. It was also the verbal expressions by individuals and families that revealed that the Spirit of God spoke to their hearts and has made a positive impact that assures that God's Word will have its proper place in their daily lives.

Each of the goals set forth in the project were measured by the methods described in chapter 1; therefore, with the assistance of families and ministerial professionals, the goals have been successfully measured and accomplished.

Strengths of the Project

The project was developed to equip parents and guardians at Bethlehem Baptist Church with the biblical knowledge and the practical application to establish and maintain a model of family worship within the home. The project was built primarily upon the Word of God as the foundation for the series. Even though there is a vast amount of resources on the topic of family worship, the main source for the project is

God's Word. Part of this foundational strength was to reflect how the Bible is relevant today to our families, and not outdated as some antagonists may portray.

Another strength was the insight from church history to help establish that family devotions have been a continual focus throughout church history. Those whose names from history may be known in contemporary circles, or hear such names quoted in sermons by contemporary preachers, help established that family devotions were a focus even in centuries gone by. History is a great source from which to learn. History does not always determine the course of the future, and history is not always a record of what is right; however, history has been entrusted to us from which we are meant to learn and grow.

Another focus of the project was the development of the sermon series. The project forces me to study additional commentators than my norm, and to dive deeper into God's Word to understand the God-given responsibility to parents. The messages varied in strength and application, but the process was helpful to me personally, to my family corporately, and to our church in general.

Another strength was the utilization of the surveys and evaluations. These tools aided in measuring the effectiveness of the sermon series and the family devotional guide. The analysis helped identify strengths and weaknesses of the project. This type of insight is valuable in future preaching and writing projects.

Another strength of the project resulted in conversations with church members who have been a blessing in establishing their own versions of family devotions. One of the highlights of the sermon series was in the sixth and final message when I was able to invite one of our core families to the stage to engage in a question and answer time. I was able to talk with the husband and wife publicly before the entire church about how they have been doing family devotions with their children and grandchildren. I had the privilege to ask how they started, if there were any challenges to overcome, and what they saw as the benefits of family devotions. I believe that this interview with the couple

before the church helped our other church members see that family devotions are possible, and that they have great benefits to the children, grandchildren, and guests.

A final strength was the development of the Family Devotional Guide. Even though the guide was elementary in its current form, it also still held strengths based upon feedback from my family, the ministerial professionals, and from families that have started utilizing the resource in their homes. The devotional guide encouraged families to have a daily Bible reading plan that also encouraged discussion based upon the Scripture selection. The guide promoted the weekly memorization of God's Word for all the family members, and it promoted the practice of learning Bible doctrine through the use of a modified catechism list. These elements have not been common in most of the BBC families, and therefore have encouraged families of all ages to experience a deeper approach to family devotions and family worship.

Weaknesses of the Project

Upon reflection of the project, a number of weaknesses that I have discovered that have already proven insightful to me. First, the development of the surveys could have been more extensive to determine the point of detachment from Bible knowledge to practical application. Even though the analysis of the surveys has revealed the breakdown from knowing God's Word and applying God's Word, the surveys did not reveal potential problem areas that could have been addressed in the sermon series.

With the sermon series in mind, one of the challenges of the project was the application to the church as a whole. The project was initially focused on equipping parents to establish and maintain family devotions. The membership of BBC is diverse in age and family settings. The majority of BBC does not have children or youth in the home; therefore, the challenge was to make application for all ages and home settings. This challenge did not make the project less effective, but the application of the sermons needed to expand beyond the original audience of families with children living at home.

Another weakness was in the Family Devotional Guide. As mentioned earlier, the guide did not have a weekly theme. This will be fixed in the future by utilizing the support Scriptures from the catechisms to determine the daily Bible reading passages and the weekly Scripture memorization. The themes can be declared so that the family would know that the topic would be for the week. The devotional guide could also be expanded to include additional discussion questions that would deepen conversations between family members over the daily reading, the weekly Scripture memorization, and the weekly catechisms; for example, it would be beneficial to ask questions that reveal a comprehension of the Scripture memory and the Bible principles.

One final weakness to address is the scope of the project. The purpose was to equip the parents with greater Bible knowledge, but it did not include the measuring of further application. Since the application of God's Word was already revealed as an area of need, the equipping to help measure new habits and spiritual disciplines within the home after the conclusion of the sermon series and the distribution of the family devotional guide would have added greater insight to the effectiveness of the project. While the fact that twenty-three families were invited to participate in the surveys, no more than thirteen participated in any of the resources. This reality identifies that ten families did not participate in any fashion of completing any of the surveys. This fact raises additional questions to try and guess or understand potential reasons. Those families that participated had invested their time in completing the surveys and attending the Sunday services. There was no measuring tool or accountability in place to encourage a higher percentage of families to participate in the project.

Theological Reflections

The topic of family devotions was one that I was familiar with in my personal life, but the process of in-depth study forced me to study commentators of an academic source which enabled me to continue to broaden my reading. Even though the topic was

familiar, the process of preparing a sermon series to enlighten and encourage the church to consider engaging in family devotions was challenging and rewarding.

One of the theological reflections was in connection to the responsibility of the parent to establish a spiritual legacy for the family. Prior to the study, a legacy would have been considered a positive element to establish in the family, but not necessarily a necessity; however, after the study, it is clear that parents have a God-given charge to purposely establish a spiritual legacy for the family and for future generations.

Another principle that resulted from the project was the faithful focus of the church fathers about family worship within the home. Those who helped establish sound doctrine through the centuries also were concerned about the spiritual development of the family within their homes. This insight was both encouraging and convicting to me personally. The personal desire to have consistent family devotions, and to guide my family in the memorization of Scripture, to learn catechisms, and to develop a daily time of Bible reading and spiritual conversations were strengthened.

A final reflection was the benefit of catechisms. Even though I still do not fully support the historical use of catechisms as a prerequisite for baptism or Lord's Supper within the church, I truly see the benefit of the resource to help learn Bible doctrine within the home. The choice of catechism also determines the doctrinal preference that will be learned by the family, but where there could be some minor doctrinal differences, those individual catechisms can be modified or omitted for family use.

Personal Reflections

The family worship project was extremely helpful to me personally, to my family, and even to the BBC church membership. The study required to develop chapters two and three were insightful and challenging. The historical overview taught me that those whom I have read and quoted have also made family devotions a priority in their own homes. This was of great importance to me since my adolescent years did not have this spiritual discipline in our home. My parents were saved as adults, and so their

spiritual growth was ongoing as our own as children. My parents were faithful to have us in church every time the doors were opened, and had a daily time of prayer before meals; however, we did not experience family devotions because our parents were young in their faith as well. As I entered into marriage with my wife, there was a practice to share a time of devotion between us; however, as our family grew with the birth of our children, the time for family devotions became more difficult. As my wife and I grew with our family, we continued to wrestle with a proper balance between the demands of family and the need for spiritual guidance. We were faithful in church attendance for our family, and we were fortunate to be able to enroll our children in private, Christian schools; but the struggle for family devotions continued to be inconsistent. The study has helped me embrace my role as a spiritual leader to my family.

The project has also been a blessing to those who choose to engage in the project with me. The surveys revealed the need within our church to apply what was known, and since the conclusion of the sermon series, there have been testimonies of how individuals and families have been more faithful in their family devotion time because of the sermon series and through the aid of the Family Devotional Guide. One family shared how that even though they have been believers in Christ for as many years as I have been alive, that the FDG has blessed and challenged them about a deeper quiet time as an aging couple. Another individual shared in recent days that they were over thirty consecutive days of faithful Bible reading and prayer. Another family shared how they were planning to utilize the FDG as a part of their New Year resolution to spend time in God's Word together as a family. Another family shared how they had something of a family prayer time, but the sermon series and the FDG had helped them take their family time deeper. As parents, they were encouraged already how it was opening spiritual conversations in the family. Based upon these gracious testimonies, the project had been a blessing to BBC. It has blessed individuals, families with children, and even empty-nesters.

As I consider what I would do differently if I had to redo the project, or if I have the opportunity to take the project through the next phase, I realize that the devotional guide would be developed with a weekly theme based upon the weekly catechism or Bible principle. I also acknowledge that the project was focused on increasing Bible knowledge, but I would consider elements that would aid in the application of the knowledge. The addition of workshops would be a blessing as well as a time of reflection or follow-up. I would also incorporate additional testimonies from families that have been doing family worship for some time as well as testimonies from families that had recently started with the transparency of the joys and challenges.

Conclusion

As I consider the totality of the family worship project, it has been a blessing and a challenge. I am grateful for what I have personally gained from the project, what it means to my family, and how it has been a blessing to our church families. The process of developing the sermon series was a joy in part because I write exegetical sermons on a weekly basis. The process of developing a family devotional guide was challenging and rewarding with insight on how to improve on the process for the future.

The testimonies from church families, my family, and from the ministerial professionals were insightful, constructive, and helpful. Their input gave me insight to strengthen what was effective and to improve what needed attention. Even though the project was measured as successful based upon the data analysis of the surveys, the information also identified areas that need further attention for the families at BBC. The surveys, the evaluations, and the testimonials have all contributed to a fuller understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the project as is. Additional work or future projects will be stronger because of the analysis and reflections.

It has been a joy to engage in the process, to preach God's Word, and to see some fruit personally and corporately. The experience at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has been challenging and positive. May God be glorified through

this project and the application to the life of the church and the homes of believers. This journey has been challenging and rewarding. To God be all glory!

APPENDIX 1

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PRACTICE SURVEY

The FDPS was utilized as a survey at the beginning of the process during the preparation period to establish the priority and practice of family worship at BBC.

THE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES SURVEY¹

is intended for parents with children living at home.

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to collect data for a doctoral project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This research is being conducted by Michael Towler for the purposes of project research. In this research, you will evaluate each Sunday sermon by checking the appropriate box. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey you are giving your informed consent for your response to be used in this research. Thank you.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please carefully read each statement and select the best answer that describes your response.

SD = Strongly Disagree

D = Disagree

DS = Disagree Somewhat

AS = Agree Somewhat

A = Agree

SA = Strongly Agree

1. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family's schedule.

SD D DS AS A SA

¹Used by permission, Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011).

2. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.

SD D DS AS A SA

3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.

SD D DS AS A SA

4. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.

SD D DS AS A SA

5. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together.

SD D DS AS A SA

6. Parents—and particularly fathers —have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.

SD D DS AS A SA

7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for the discipline of my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.

SD D DS AS A SA

8. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth.

SD D DS AS A SA

INSTRUCTIONS: Please carefully read each statement and select the best answer that describes your response.

N = Never

O = Once

CT = a Couple of Times

3/4 = Three of Four Times

5/6 = Five or Six Times

7+ = Seven Times or More

9. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past WEEK have I prayed aloud with any of my children?

N O CT 3/4 5/6 7+

10. How many times in the past WEEK has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned on?

N O CT 3/4 5/6 7+

11. How many times in the past MONTH have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?

N O CT 3/4 5/6 7+

12. How many times in the past MONTH have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?

N O CT 3/4 5/6 7+

13. How many times in the past TWO MONTHS has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?

N O CT 3/4 5/6 7+

14. How many times in the past TWO MONTHS have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children's spiritual development?

N O CT 3/4 5/6 7+

15. How many times in the past YEAR have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?

N O CT 3/4 5/6 7+

16. How many times in the past YEAR has any church leader made contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child's spiritual development?

N O CT 3/4 5/6 7+

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APPENDIX 2

FAMILY WORSHIP SERMON SERIES SURVEY

The family worship sermon series survey was utilized by a panel of three ministerial professionals to examine and evaluate the curriculum and the delivery of the sermons delivered on Sunday mornings at BBC.

Family Worship Sermon Series Survey

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to collect data for a doctoral project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This research is being conducted by Michael Towler for the purposes of project research. In this research, you will evaluate each Sunday sermon by checking the appropriate box. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey you are giving your informed consent for your response to be used in this research. Thank you.

Sermon Evaluation Rubric

Family Worship Sermon Series					
Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The sermon outline was well organized.					
The sermon message was faithful to the Scriptural text.					
The sermon message was delivered clearly.					
The Scripture cross references were supportive of the message text and theme.					
The sermon illustrations helped communicate the biblical truth.					
The sermon's theme and main points were stated clearly.					
The sermon message was relevant to the congregation.					
The sermon application is achievable by the congregation.					

APPENDIX 3
PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR FAMILY WORSHIP
EVALUATION

The practical guide for family worship evaluation was utilized by a panel of three professionals to examine and evaluate the Family Devotion Guide and presentation of the guide.

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to collect data for a doctoral project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This research is being conducted by Michael Towler for the purposes of project research. In this research, you will evaluate each Sunday sermon by checking the appropriate box. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey you are giving your informed consent for your response to be used in this research. Thank you.

Evaluation Form for Family Worship Guide					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the guide is Scripturally sound. All Scripture is properly applied.					
The content of the guide is theologically sound.					
Scope					
The content of the guide sufficiently addresses each topic that is introduced.					
The guide sufficiently covers the basics of family worship.					
Methodology					
The guide sufficiently addresses the basics of family worship.					
The guide makes use of various learning approaches to family worship.					

Practicality					
The guide includes opportunities to practice family worship.					
At the end of the training, participants will be able to lead their families in worship.					

Please include any additional comments regarding the guide below:

Date: _____

APPENDIX 4

T-TEST OF FAMILY WORSHIP SERMON SERIES

The t-test of family worship sermon series was administered by the author to the twenty families to measure the increase of knowledge through the sermon series on Sunday mornings.

THE FAMILY WORSHIP SERMON SERIES SURVEY

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to collect data for a doctoral project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This research is being conducted by Michael Towler for the purposes of project research. In this research, you will evaluate each Sunday sermon by checking the appropriate box. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey you are giving your informed consent for your response to be used in this research. Thank you.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please carefully read each statement and select the best answer that describes your response.

Strong Disagree SD	Disagree D	Disagree Somewhat DS	Agree Somewhat AS	Agree A	Strong Agree SA
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1. God is the Creator of the family.
SD D DS AS A SA

2. God has a design and purpose for the family.
SD D DS AS A SA

3. God desires for every adult Christian to be growing spiritual in their relationship with Him.
SD D DS AS A SA

4. God desires parents to teach their children God's Word.
SD D DS AS A SA

5. God's Word commands parents to live as examples of what it means to be a Christian for their children.

SD D DS AS A SA

6. God's Word commands parents to purposely teach the Scriptures to their children.

SD D DS AS A SA

7. God's Word reveals that the role that parents live today in their homes will have a direct impact on the lives of their future grandchildren.

SD D DS AS A SA

8. Part of God's design for spiritual growth includes a daily Bible reading time.

SD D DS AS A SA

9. God's design for prayer is to be a daily part of the family's life.

SD D DS AS A SA

10. God's design for music and song is to escort Christians into the presence of God with praise.

SD D DS AS A SA

11. God's design for spiritual growth includes the memorization of the Scriptures.

SD D DS AS A SA

12. God's design for the family is for the fathers to be the spiritual leader in the home.

SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 5

LETTERS TO THE FAMILIES REQUESTING THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE SURVEYS

The three letters to the families requesting their participation of the surveys to assist in the completion of the Family Worship project at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky.

(Letter #1 / Date)

Dear (Family Name),

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is my hope that you and your family are well. I am sending you this letter asking if you would be willing to assist me in my school project. I am approaching the final segment of my doctoral studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a part of my degree is to assess the current beliefs and practices of Bethlehem Baptist Church as it pertains to discipleship within the home.

Would you be willing to fill out the included **Family Practice Discipleship Survey** and return it to me in the enclosed, self-addressed envelope? Your responses will be kept anonymous, and your honest responses will assist me in this educational pursuit.

Lord willing, in November of 2017, I am planning to start a six-week study on *The Biblical Foundation to Family Worship* series on Sunday morning during the 10:45 a.m. worship service. Would you also be willing to fill out a **Family Worship Sermon Series Survey** before the first sermon, and then again, the same survey after the final message is delivered? This survey allows me to measure any growth in the understanding and application to family worship practices in the home from the message series. I will mail these surveys to you at the appropriate time.

Please know that your involvement is completely voluntary and anonymous. If you are unable to participate in the process, I do appreciate your prayers as I strive to complete this degree in a timely manner. I am grateful for your assistance in any manner you can offer. It is my prayer that our study of God's Word will enlighten us and empower us to guide our families closer to God through a daily time of prayer and devotion.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact me in person, by phone, or by email. I welcome your insight.

Servant in Christ,

Michael Towler, M.Div.
Pastor
(cell)
(email)

(Letter #2 / Date)

Dear (Family Name),

Grace and Peace from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to you and your family. Let me first say “Thank you” for receiving my first letter last month as well as for your assistance and prayers in this exciting process of my schooling. As promised, I am sending you another survey that will be utilized as a measuring tool as we begin our new sermon series this month. This survey is anonymous, and it will aid me in the finalization of my seminary project.

Lord willing, this Sunday, I will be starting a six-week study on *The Biblical Foundation to Family Worship* during the 10:45 a.m. worship service. Would you be willing to fill out the **Family Worship Sermon Series Survey** upon arrival of this letter and simply return it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope? If all goes according to plan, upon the completion of the sixth message, I will send out an identical survey that is meant to measure the effectiveness and application of the sermon series. I will mail the final survey to you at the conclusion of the series in early December.

If you missed any of the Sunday services over the next six weeks, do not worry. Please know that you are invited to go to our church website and click on the “Resource” link on the top navigation bar to access sermons by their date. Do not feel obligated to do so, but I encourage you to consider it.

Again, please know that your involvement is completely voluntary and anonymous. If you are unable to participate in the process, I do appreciate your prayers as I strive to complete this degree in a timely manner. I am grateful for your assistance in any manner you can offer. It is my hope and prayer that our study of God’s Word will enlighten us and empower us to guide our families closer to God through a daily time of prayer and devotion.

If you did not get to send in your first survey yet, please know that I will be grateful to receive those at your earliest convenience; your assistance will be helpful. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact me in person, by phone, or by email. I welcome your insight.

Servant in Christ,

Michael Towler, M.Div.
Pastor
(cell)
(email)

(Letter #3 / Date)

Dear (Family Name),

Thank You for your assistance and prayers in this process for my schooling. As mentioned in my last letter, I am sending you the **final** survey that will be utilized as a measuring tool now that we have concluded the sermon series on “The Biblical Foundation for Family Worship.” This survey is the exact same survey you took a couple months ago, and as always it is also anonymous.

Would you be willing to fill out the **Family Worship Sermon Series Survey** upon arrival of this letter and simply return it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope?

If you missed any of the Sunday services over the past six weeks, do not worry. Please know that you are invited to go to our church website and click on the “Resource” link on the top navigation bar to access sermons by their date.

Again, please know that your involvement is completely voluntary and anonymous. It is my hope and prayer that our study of God’s Word has enlightened us and empowered us to guide our families closer to God through a daily time of prayer and devotion.

As a part of my project, I created a 13-week **Family Devotion Guide**, and I have set a copy aside for you. If you did not receive your copy this past Sunday, please let me know the next time you are here at church and I will be happy to get it to you. I hope the guide helps in your journey to lead your family in this special time of family worship.

If you did not get to send in any previous surveys yet, please know that I will be grateful to receive those at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact me.

Servant in Christ,

Michael Towler, M.Div.

Pastor

(cell)

(email)

APPENDIX 6

FAMILY WORSHIP SERMON SERIES

The six messages for the family worship sermon series in manuscript form.

The Biblical Foundation to Family Worship Series
“How to Establish a Biblical Foundation to Family Worship in the Home”
Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Introduction:

1. Ex.- Foundations: How important is a foundation to a building? From experience, builders know that the right foundation is critical to the success of the structure that is built upon it. If the foundation is weak, then the structure will suffer, especially in times when the building is put under stress. If the foundation is strong, then in those times of storm and duress, the building has a greater chance to survive the event. The same is true for our families. If our foundations are strong, then when the difficulties of life arise, then there are better chances of surviving the storm; if they are weak, then the family will be much less prepared to handle the difficulties of life.
2. We are going to enter into a study of foundations... for the family... through the simple implementation of God’s Word in the everyday life of our families.
3. What is a family? In today’s society, the definition of a family has a variety of descriptions. There are families of one (single). We have single parent homes with children. We have traditional definitions of a mother and a father with children. We have grandparents helping raise their grandchildren. We have adoptive and foster parents. There are so many variations, and I want to encourage each family unit to consider God’s Word as we seek to study a biblical foundation of devotions in our families.
4. Overview: Over the next several weeks, we will lay the biblical and historical foundation to equip parents, grandparents, and adults to establish a time of devotion in the home (Bible reading, prayer, and more). The foundation will be built upon God’s Word, and we will gain additional insight from our church fathers, who saw the need and biblical mandate to encourage and equip parents to establish a regular time of family devotion in the home.
5. As we begin this journey, allow me to share a general truth that will aid us in this process. This truth will remind us that we are embracing a spiritual discipline that goes beyond simple verbal instruction. In order for a spiritual legacy to be established in the home and to be potentially embraced by our children, a parent must realize that we cannot pass on what we do not possess.
6. Ex.- Money, Morals, Ethics, Skill, Spiritual Habits... faith, servant, encourager...
7. Our main text this week is Deuteronomy 6. God has spoken to Moses, and now Moses has called for the elders, grandparents, parents, and adults to assemble to hear the instruction of the Lord.

8. The emphasis of Deuteronomy 6 can be traced from the Old Testament, through the early church fathers, through the reformation preachers, and into the pulpit today.
 - a. For example, Lyman Coleman, “a scholar of early church history, writes about family worship practice of the Christian in the decades immediately after the New Testament times: ‘At an early hour in the morning the family was assembled, and a portion of the Scripture was read from the Old Testament, which was followed by a hymn and a prayer.’” (Donald Whitney, *Family Worship*, pg.28-29)
 - b. An example from the early church fathers is Tertullian (c.160-225) wrote about family worship practices in a marriage between believers, “They pray together, they worship together, they fast together; instructing one another, encouraging one another, strengthening one another.” (Ibid., 29)
 - c. Another example was John Chrysostom (c.349-407), who “urged every house should be a church, and every head of a family a spiritual shepherd, remembering the account he must give even for his children.” (Ibid., 30)
 - d. In the weeks ahead, we will hear from other church fathers, reformers, puritans, and contemporary preachers on the historical instruction on family worship.
9. The building of our foundation begins in Deuteronomy 6...
10. The Biblical Principle in our text is known to the Hebrews as “The Shema” (vs.4-5)
 - a. “The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!” (Covenant Name of God)
 - 1.) Moses was reminding Israel through the use of God’s revealed covenant name. It was the use of this special name as the Creator of the universe that God entered into covenant with the Hebrews. As long as Israel obeyed God, then He would provide, protect, and lead them. If the people rebelled against God, then He would remove His hand of blessing.
 - 2.) The command of Moses associated with God’s covenant name reminds and warns Israel of what is expected of them by their Creator and Redeemer. Full obedience.
 - b. The “Shema” continues... “You shall love God with all our heart, all your soul and all your might.”
 - 1.) One commentator, Eugene Merrill, offers insight to understand the anthropomorphic terms of affection for God.
 - 2.) Heart - “the heart is the seat of intellect, equivalent to the mind or rational part of humankind.” Interesting as well, that to be upon one’s heart is

equivalent to say that the thought is in “one’s constant, conscious reflection.”

- 3.) Soul – “the invisible part of the individual, including the will and sensibilities.”
 - 4.) Might – “the physical side with all its functions and capabilities.”
 - 5.) Combined, the Shema is an all-encompassing declaration, requiring every essence of man to love God. This type of love will result in the reverence and obedience that honors God for Who He is and all that He has done!
 - 6.) Another commentator, Ajith Fernando, suggests that it is through the direct commands to fear God and to love God that obedience to God is only possible. It is absolutely critical that the words of God infiltrate and saturate our minds in order to transform us into holy, loving vessels that God desires for us to be in His creation.
 - 7.) The internalization of God’s Word is meant to impact both our internal and external human elements. Every part of us must be touched by God’s sanctifying Word in order to transform us. As God’s words are internalized and upon our hearts, then our thinking and our behavior will be clearly marked by His Word.
11. From this text, Moses was commanding the people of Israel to etch God’s Word into the hearts and lives of their children. If done properly, then there is a hope for the present generation as well as hope for future generations.
 12. Let us walk through our outlines together this morning...

I. Three Essential Principles that Establish a Biblical Foundation for Family Devotions in the Home.

a.) The Command to the Parents is to be Embraced Personally

1. Review Supporting Verses: Deut.5:1; 6:1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9. – “You”
2. The elders, adults, parents, grandparents of Israel were being addressed by Moses. He was instructing them with the commands he received from God.
3. The Command to Love God was first to the parents! In order to pass on a love for God, for His Word, for His kingdom, it must be something that is a personal priority to the parent!
4. Notice, in verse 6, that God’s commands to the elders were to be “on their heart.”
 - a.) This command means that the individual should cherish God’s Word. This expression helps us understand that we

are to totally surrendered, wholeheartedly committed to God and His Word.

- b.) King David reveals such a dedication in Psalm 119...
 - c.) Ps.119:11; Ps.119:47; Ps.119:97
 - d.) As well as the Apostle Paul, Col.3:16 – “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...”
5. In order to establish the foundation of family devotions, then God’s Word must be a priority to the parent (guardian).
 6. To what degree do we love God’s Word in our personal lives? What level of priority does God’s Word hold in our daily lives? Whatever it is, we know it, our children already know it, and the reality of this priority is already being passed on to them. Today, we can begin a move to reset our priorities.
 7. In addition to God’s Word being personal, there is a second foundational principle...

b.) The Command to the Parents is to Lived Out Publicly

1. Review Supporting Verses: 6:1, 2, 7, 8, 9. – “Example, model”
2. To pass on a biblical foundation, a foundation for family devotions, a passion for God’s Word, Will, and Kingdom, then what is embraced personally must be witnessed by our family publicly.
3. If God’s Word is a priority to the parent personally, then it will be manifested publicly. This is both a truth in human nature and a spiritual law. (Mt.7:16; 12:34; 15:18)
4. Example: If we were to ask your children what does their parents love the most? What do they despise? Who is their favorite sports team? Where do they like to eat? What secret do they not want you to tell other people?
5. How do the children know all these things? Because they observe and learn us. Wouldn’t it be great if they see our love for God and His Word as well?
6. Make God’s Word a priority in your life, and your children will catch part of that from you as well.
7. Be the example of what you long for your children to become. Show them what it looks like by our actions.
8. Equally important to our study today is the third foundational principle...

c.) The Command to the Parent is to be Passed on Purposely

1. Review Supporting Verses: 6:2, 7
2. Passing on God's principles is not meant to be left to indirect, inadvertent means; however, we are commanded to be purposeful in our methods in order to give our children the strongest foundation they can possibly have.
3. Every parent is passing on something to their children. What are we passing on? The love for... what? (sports, Hollywood, self, money, God?)
4. God has a Clear Purpose: (vs.1-2) Pass it down to the next generation.
 - a. They are taught so that they will be lived out and obeyed.
 - b. Educating the children in the way of God, the Word of God, is an absolute necessity!
 - c. We will teach as we live God's Word out in our lives, but also because we purposely take opportunities to talk about God and His Word!
 - d. Prov.22:6- "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it."
 - e. We are all teaching our children something! What are we teaching them? More specific... what are we teaching them about God!?!
5. God offers an all-inclusive approach to His Plan... (vs.7)
 - a. Moses uses four descriptive terms to identify opportunities that God's Word can be purposely and diligently taught...
 - b. Sitting, Walking, Rising, and Laying Down – these are expressions that imply at all times every day, look for teachable moments, make teachable moments!
 - c. The emphasis is to live by God's Word, experience them together, obey, them, enjoy them, talk about them purposely!
 - d. Example: the next sunset or rainbow that you see, don't just mention the beauty of it, but take this opportunity to remind them of our Creator!
 - e. Then Moses instructed the people to bind God's Word on their hands and foreheads as well as to write God's Word on the doorposts and gates at their homes.

- f. These instructions were meant to be a public declaration of faith and commitment to God and to His Word.
- 6. God promises blessings to His people for their faithfulness
 - a. (Summarize) Verse 10-19 – Moses announces that God will give the Israelites land. This land will have cities and homes that they themselves did not labor to build. They will have vineyards that they did not plant. They will have wells of water that they did not dig.
 - b. Obedience to God has numerous blessings. Not all blessings are material, but the greatest blessing truly is eternal.
 - c. What blessing will you be passing down to your children and to your grandchildren, if the Lord should tarry?
 - d. The greatest gift any parent can pass on is not materialism, abilities, or even knowledge... it is a faith! A faith that blesses them in this life and in eternity.
 - e. No one will enter heaven on the coat-tails of another person. No one gets to heaven because their parents or grandparents were good Christians. Every person must make a personal profession of faith for themselves.
 - f. **Gospel:** Each person must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He died on the cross in our place, as our substitute because of our sins.
 - g. Each person must call upon Jesus to be their personal Savior and Lord in order to have their sins forgiven and their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life.
 - h. There is no greater gift to pass on than a genuine faith in the one and only Savior Jesus Christ.
 - i. Our children must see our passion and commitment to our Savior, and our prayer is that as we purposely instruct them in the ways of God that they too will surrender to the saving power of the Holy Spirit!

Conclusion:

1. The foundation will be strong when God's principles are personally embraced, publicly lived out, and purposely passed on!
2. We are passing something on to our children and grandchildren. What part of your faith are you living out for them to see? What part are you talking about and teaching them?

3. Let us be committed to establishing a foundation of family devotions in our homes to help lay the foundation for a spiritual legacy for our children and for future family generations to come!
4. How? IN the weeks ahead, we will look at example of tools to help establish and build family devotions within the home.
5. In the weeks ahead, we will visit other Bible passages to develop a biblical understanding of the parent's role as the primary disciple-makers in the lives of their children. Join us on this journey as we walk through the Bible discovering God's will for us as adults, spouses, parents, guardians, and grandparents.
6. Will you join me in prayer...?

The Biblical Foundation to Family Worship Series
“A Biblical Foundation for Family Worship will have an Impact
on our Children's Present and Future”
Proverbs 22:6

Introduction: (read vs.4-9)

1. Last week we looked into the instruction of Deuteronomy 6. God's Word is clear that believing parents have a biblical obligation to personally live God's Word in their own lives as well as diligently teach God's truths to their children.
2. The early church fathers understood this principle to be true, and even though church history is limited on the subject, there is still sufficient evidence that allows us to build upon God's word and their teaching to help us as parents embrace and implement a plan to teach our children so that their present day lives and, Lord willing, their futures will be blessed through God's Word.
3. Allow me to share other examples in church history from the Medieval times and into the reformation period that emphasize family devotions:
 - a. There is evidence in the Medieval ages (starting as early as 400 A.D.) Michael Wren Jr. writes, “Although discipleship within the family seems to have been promoted primarily by local priests and revolved around parents and godparents teaching their children basic doctrinal statements and prayers, evidence reveals that other resources were available for some.” (Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 106.) What are these other resources? It reveals that effort was put into developing spiritual growth in the homes for families.

- b. The reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) “also recognized that like any other Christian husband and father, he had the responsibility to be the worship-leading pastor of his family.” (Stinson and Jones, 111)
 - c. Luther also expressed that the household was an “earthly kingdom where parents train children in the commandments of God.” (Stinson and Jones, 117)
 - d. Another reformer, John Knox (1514-1572) wrote a letter to a Christian brother saying, “Brethren, we are ordained of God to rule our own houses in His true fear, and according to His Word... and therefore, I say, must make them partakers in reading, exhortation, and in making common prayer, which I would in every house were used once a day at least.” (Donald Whitney, *Family Worship*, 31)
 - e. Sprinkled throughout church history is an on-going emphasis on spiritual growth for the children led by the parents within the home.
4. Our study today will enlighten us through a proverbial teaching of King Solomon.
 5. Let us take a moment and understand what a proverb is...
 - a. A proverbial truth is a general truth that is meant to be a guide for life; however, it is not a promise that guarantees a specific result.
 - b. Example: “An apple a day keeps the doctors away.”
 - c. Example: “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.”
 - d. Example” “God helps those who helps themselves” (Benjamin Franklin)
 6. The book of Proverbs has at least 37 verses that offer wisdom to parenting... today we focus on just one of those proverbs...
 7. Let us dive into this proverb and discover how what we do today can be a blessing to our children’s present lives and offers hope for their futures.

I. A Commitment to Family Worship will Impact Our Children’s Present.

- a.) Family Worship within the Home Begins with a Commitment by the Parent to Spiritually Train their Children.
 1. “Train” (def.) Hebrew word “chanak” meaning to dedicate, consecrate, initiate, or discipline. The word carries the idea of dedicating something at its beginning so that it will stay on course the full length of its existence.
 2. For example, in the OT, “Train” has also been translated “dedicate.” It has been used to describe a dedication of a house and of the temple.
 3. Deuteronomy 20:5 (house)

4. 1 Kings 8:63 (temple)
 5. The house and temple are to be consecrated at their beginning so that they will be utilized for a God-honoring purpose the entire length of its existence.
 6. Solomon is using this word in connection to our children. Each of our children has an eternal destiny, and it is our responsibility to be personally committed to the biblical role as primary disciple makers in our homes. In this process, we must decide if we will or will not dedicate our children to this process of spiritual growth as well.
 7. To train a child is to be committed to the process of spiritual growth in their lives, and a process that we commit to from their birth, their beginnings, and see it through until we no longer can...
 8. Application: As parents, we express commitment to our children in a number of areas... academic, sports, clubs, and even entertainment. Of all that we hold as a priority in our lives and in our family lives, let be sure to keep our family devotions and our family spiritual growth as a top priority as well.
- b.) Family Worship Builds on a Commitment to a Godly Course
1. "...in the way he should go..."
 2. First, to be clear, "the way" has already been chosen by God, but as parents, we must discern how to best teach our children God's way.
 - a.) Please know that the book of Proverbs only identifies two possible paths... the path of righteousness and wisdom OR the path of wickedness and foolishness.
 - b.) Solomon would not leave the choice of the path to the preference of the parent or of the child, rather the path chosen is the path reveal by God in His Word. The faith that has been entrusted to the parent is the faith that is to be taught to the children. The path chosen is the path of righteousness that has been declared by God's good counsel.
 - c.) The path of righteousness can simply be understood as obedience to God's revealed Word and pleasing in God's sight. God's Way!
 - d.) The path chosen is not to be altered by the child, their preferences, or their depravity. The path chosen has been set by

God. So then, how does a parent train their children in the way they should go?

3. This expression has stirred up numerous interpretations and applications.
4. Duane Garrett, an Old Testament commentary author, explains that the training should be in “a manner that is fitting a child.”
 - a.) Garrett clarifies that this spiritual training is not to be altered in principle, but rather that the methods chosen to teach God’s unchanging truth should be examined, altered, and implemented that would result in the child being able to best learn God’s Word.
 - b.) The message will not change, but the methods should fit the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual stage of the child. As the child grows and changes, so should the methods.
5. Derek Kidner, (Tyndale Commentaries), believes that the training should be according to the child’s personality and individuality. He simply believes that Solomon is encouraging the parents to discern the personality of the child, and adapt the teaching methods that will help the child learn best.
 - a.) He bases this partially on the connection of the root word that Solomon uses... “according to his bend” is a military term that is used to describe how an archer selects a piece of wood to make a bow. He is to study the natural bend of the wood, then apply pressure with the bend in order to attach the bow string. If the archer bends the bow, applies pressure in a way contrary to the natural bend, then the wood can snap.
 - b.) As we study our children, may discern their personalities and be able to disciple and discipline according to their “bend”.
6. Stop for a moment and realize how wise this is... as we develop as a human race, as we discern how to study behaviors and draw conclusions based upon the observations, we have made great strides in society in the choice of methods for training children.
 - a.) The method chosen to train a 16-year-old is very different when teaching a 6-year-old.

- b.) God's word does not change, but the methods to teaching are different, the depth of the lessons can be different, and the application may be more specific due to the different life challenges at those ages.
 - c.) What a 6 year is facing is different than what a 16 year is facing. The first grader is still figuring out how to be selfless, thoughtful, respectful, and yet discover the amazing truths in God's creation.
 - d.) The 16-year-old has entered into a strange world that includes raging hormones, changing physical features, and incredible pressures from peers and society.
 - e.) The truth of God can be taught to both, but the vehicles in which the lessons are taught will be very different. The depth and application will also be different. We have discovered that children learn best through age-appropriate methods. I am grateful that our Bible study curriculum for children reflect this, and as parents, I believe that we can be more successful if we choose the appropriate vehicle that our children will understand best based upon their age and learning abilities.
- c.) One preacher said it this way, "Christian nurture, the education of small children in the things for God, is a fundamental duty of Christian families and of the church. But this nurture must be appropriate to the psychological development, intellectual comprehension, and moral consciousness of small children."
 - d.) As parents, we have the privilege and responsibility to impact our children's present today's and tomorrows for God through the way of God.
 - e.) Our impact also can reach beyond the present into the futures of our children. Lord willing, we can establish a spiritual legacy that will bless future generations.

II. A Commitment to Family Worship can Impact Our Children's Future.

- a.) Present Day Family Worship is Accompanied by a Future Blessing.
 - 1. "...when he is old he will not depart from it."
 - 2. This expression is in reference to the training that has been given by the parents, not necessarily the path that has been taught.

3. In other words, the child (maybe now adult) will not be able to forget the training that has been received in their earlier years. Even though the child has not embraced the path for themselves at the current moment, they cannot forget what has been instilled in the minds and etched into their hearts.
 4. Therefore, there is always hope! No one is ever beyond the reach or grace of God!
 5. The power of the gospel can find any person in any condition and offer them salvation and deliverance through faith in Jesus Christ!
 6. A great example of this redemption can be found in the story of the prodigal son. After the son wasted his resource on sinful living, and he found himself in deplorable conditions, it was there in his pit and mire that the son realized what he had done and that there was a gracious father who may be able to rescue him... (Lk.15:11-32)
 7. Just as the prodigal son came into his right mind, so too our loved ones may need to hit rock bottom in order to recall the faithful teaching of his parents about the right path... there is always hope in Jesus Christ!
- b.) The Blessing of God is Conditioned upon Obedience by the Parent and Child.
1. The parent (guardian) must be committed to God's plan for spiritual growth in the home. The parents are the primary disciple makers in their children's lives.
 2. The child must embrace God's Word for themselves as they continue to mature.
 3. If we fail to train our children, we have done an injustice to them, their futures, and possibly future generations.

Conclusion:

1. May we be faithful to this proverbial truth, and lead our children in the way of God! May we faithfully pray for our children (regardless of how old they are) that they fall in love with God and lift Him up as their Savior and Lord!
2. It is only right that we as parents and grandparents that we long for our children's well-being... and for God's blessings upon them. According to this proverb, the blessing cannot be available if we as parents do not teach and guide them in the way of God.

The Biblical Foundation to Family Worship Series
“A Biblical Foundation for Family Worship in the Home
will Help Establish a Spiritual Legacy”
Psalm 78:1-8

Introduction:

1. The foundation has been laid in God’s Word, and we are on a journey to discover what God has revealed in His written Word. As we discover God’s truth, we are also striving to lay a foundation in our personal lives and in our homes that will create an atmosphere of family devotions for our current family, and Lord willing, for the generations to follow.
2. We have had the privilege to hear bits and pieces of the early church fathers and reformers on their view and importance of family devotions. Let us also hear from some of our Puritans as they addressed the subject:
 - a. When the Westminster Confession was completed in 1647, a second document was created to help families understand the confession, entitled *The Directory for Family Worship*. This devotional companion was meant to assist families in their pursuit of daily family devotions.
 - b. It has been observed, that “For the Puritans, every household was to be ‘a household of faith; every father a priest in his own family.’” (Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 120)
 - c. Richard Baxter (1615-1651) taught, “Solemn prayer and praises are a duty owned by the families of divine appointment... Family prayer and praises are a duty owned by the teaching and sanctifying work of the Spirit; therefore, they are of God.” (Donald Whitney, *Family Worship*, 33)
 - d. Matthew Henry (1662-1714) who is known for his Bible commentary also exhorted believers to “turn your families into little churches... a church in the house will be a good legacy, nay, it will be a good inheritance, to be left to your children after you.” (Whitney, 34-35)
 - e. Jonathon Edwards (1703-1758) began the day with private prayers followed by family prayers... care for his children’s soul was his preeminent concern. Each meal was accompanied by household devotions, and at the end of each day [his wife] joined him in his study for prayers.” (Whitney, 35-36)
3. Allow me to introduce a term that may seem new to some of us... “spiritual legacy.”

4. By definition, a legacy is “anything handed down from the past, as from an ancestor or predecessor.” (Brian Hayes, “*The Legacy Path: Discover Intentional Spiritual Parenting*”, 3.)
5. Therefore, a spiritual legacy is equipping a “*new generation of Christ-followers who live to love God passionately and to love people practically in every aspect of life.*” (Haynes, 9.)
6. This is a generation that loves God, loves God’s Word, loves the church, longs for ministry; that consults God’s Word before making decisions; that realizes Christianity is not a passive faith, rather it requires daily action!
7. How do we establish a spiritual legacy in our home and hopefully in the lives of our children?
8. Immediately, we must realize that this type of legacy is not solely taught, but it is most effective when it is both taught and caught...
9. Family devotions are foundational to a spiritual legacy. Family devotions are a spiritual discipline that require effort, commitment, priority, not just reactionary or optionally.
10. Let us look into Psalm 78 and discover the charge to the parents that impacts 4 generations... Parents, children, plus two more unborn generations...

I. A Spiritual Legacy Must have a Generational Starting Point.

a.) God’s Guidance for a Proper Foundation for His People (vs.1-4)

1. Vs.1 – Listen to God’s Instructions (Listen with the intent of obeying)
2. Vs.1 – Incline your ear is to learn what God is teaching (Lean in to hear, hunger for God’s Word.)
3. Vs.4 – Teach God’s Word. Do not conceal God’s truths from the children.
 - a. It is not our place to determine IF our children should learn about God our Creator and His Son our Savior; it is our biblical obligation to teach our children!
 - b. Tell them the Praises of the Lord! Testify! Tell them about God’s faithfulness in our lives!
 - c. Tell them about who God is, His character, His power, His wonderful works! Make God known to our children!

- d. Charles Spurgeon – “It is the duty of the church of God to maintain, in fullest vigor, every agency intended for the religious education of the young.”
- 4. Vs.5 – God established a law that was to be obeyed by the people leaders and taught to the nation as well.
- 5. Vs.5 – God commands His people to teach their children God’s Word
- 6. Vs.6 – Generational Discipleship is God’s Design.
- 7. Vs.6 – What is learned by the one generation, by God’s design, is to be taught to the generations to come. This is meant to be an unbroken chain of family (generational) discipleship.

b.) The Fruit of Obedience for a Proper Foundation (vs.5-8)

- 1. “so that”... we are commanded to teach our children God’s Word so that they themselves will have the opportunity to learn about God, but also to pass on a spiritual legacy to our future generations.
- 2. Children will have confidence in God. (Trust God even when we do not understand.) **“Faith comes by hearing the Word of God” (Rom.10:17)*
- 3. Children will not forget God’s Mighty Works. (This was a great problem with Israel, when they forget about God, when they forget about God’s faithfulness and His mighty deeds, then they are vulnerable to turn their affections elsewhere.)
- 4. Children will be Encouraged to Obey God and His Word.
- 5. Children will be less likely to Rebel against God. (Listen to the qualities chosen to describe such a forgetful generation: stubborn, rebellious, unrepentant, and unfaithful.)

c.) Guidelines for Establishing a Spiritual Legacy:

- 1. In order to establish a Spiritual Legacy, there must be a purposeful decision by the founding generation to initiate a healthy biblical foundation in their personal lives.
- 2. The practice and application of God’s Word must be personally embraced in the life of the founding generation.
- 3. The truths and practice of God’s Word must be publicly lived as an example before the observation of the next generation.
- 4. The truths and practice of God’s Word must be purposely taught to the next generation.

Conclusion:

- a. The Biblical Foundation Must Ultimately be Personal!
- b. As much as parents may wish for their children to embrace saving faith in Jesus Christ, every person must come to that point that they confess faith in Jesus personally.
- c. If a child walks away from the faith as they become adults, may it Not be b/c of our negligence to disciple our families... even if God grants us to do so unto the second, third, and fourth generations!
- d. The greatest way to reach our future family generations for Christ is to reach the generation you have now in your home!
- e. Grandparents, you still have a powerful influence in the lives of our precious children, do not stop being the spiritual leaders in the family!
- f. Reading Recommendations:
- g. Brian Haynes. *“The Legacy Path: Discovering Intentional Spiritual Parenting.”* Nashville, TN: Randall House Publishings, 2011.
- h. Martha Peace and Stuart W. Scott. *“The Faithful Parent: A Biblical Guide to Raising a Family.”* Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishings, 2010.
- i. What type of a spiritual legacy are we passing on to our children? What degree is our love for God? To what degree do we show love to others (deserving and not deserving)? To what degree do we have a love for God’s Word? For the church? For service and ministry? For missions and evangelism?

The Biblical Foundation to Family Worship Series
“A Family Worship Time will Help Embrace the Responsibility
to Nurture our Children in the Lord”
Ephesians 6:1-4

Introduction:

1. As we move halfway through our study, we welcome the words of Charles Spurgeon and Martin Lloyd-Jones to give us insight into the biblical view of family devotions in our Christian homes:
 - a. Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) was one of the most well-known pastors who addressed family worship on a regular basis. He wrote, “If we want to bring up a godly family... let us seek to train them up in the fear of God by meeting together as a family for worship.” Spurgeon lived at home what he preached

from the pulpit. Anyone guests saw this first-hand if they stayed with the Spurgeon family. (Whitney, 38).

- b. Martin Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981) was a pastor and author in London, who also wrote on family worship as a key element in ministry. Ian Murry wrote a biography after Jones' death, and he noted that "Family prayer marked the close of every day." (Whitney, 41) Jones' death was a great loss to his family in both roles as father and spiritual leader in the home.
2. Paul introduces a great topic in Ephesians 5 (husband / wife relationship). His teachings on the family continue on into chapter 6... (parenting)
 - a. 5:2-33 – Husbands and Wives
 - 1.) Husband love his wife the way Christ loves the church and gave Himself for her.
 - 2.) Wife is to respect and submit to her husband as unto the Lord.
 - b. 6:1-3 – Children to Parents
 - 1.) Obey & Honor parents
 - 2.) God offers a blessing of long life
 - c. 6:4 – Parents to Children (our focus for today)
3. Paul offers two imperatives, one being in the form of a negative, and the other a positive.
4. Let us look into our text and discover what the Spirit of God led Paul to write to us...

I. Nurturing Children Begins with a Command for Discernment (vs.4a)

- a.) "Do not provoke your children to anger"
- b.) This call for discernment is repeated in Colossians 3:21 – "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart."
- c.) **What does it mean to "provoke?"**
 1. Provoke means to arouse to wrath or anger, to incite, to the point of utter exasperation and resentment; to push someone's buttons.
 2. Literally, it means to follow close behind, as the image of a drill instructor following close behind you screaming in your ears!
 3. Part of this study asks the question for us... Why Not? Paul reveals in Colossians 3 that the children can "lose heart." (discouraged, broken spirited.)
- d.) Another question to ask... WHAT can provoke our children to anger (discouragement)? A couple of suggestions...

1. Unrealistic Expectations – things change with time (however, a child who engages in rebellion, injustice, immorality needs to be addressed, taught, and redirected to a right path.)
 2. Over-controlling a Child – too tight of a hold, authoritarian, my way of the highway...
 3. Under-controlling a Child – no/too little parental guidance and involvement
 4. Inconsistent Life of the Parent
- e.) Our responsibility as parents (grandparents) is to exercise discernment in the process of raising children. To discern when we have wronged them, offended them, frustrated them, wounded them, and corrected them; then we are to respond appropriately. If need be, may we be a living example of repentance and reconciliation, especially with them.
- f.) Paul uses the negative command to offer divine instruction, and now the positive command...

II. Nurturing Children Builds upon a Command to Disciple (vs.4b)

- a.) “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”
- b.) What does it mean to “Bring Them Up?”**
1. To bring to the point of maturity, to nurture, to feed effectively.
 2. Our commitment as parents goes beyond just having them at church when the doors are open and it fits our family schedule... it is a commitment to effectively discipling our children to the point of spiritual maturity! May God help us on this exciting journey!
- c.) What is the “Discipline of the Lord?”**
1. Discipline (def.) means to nurture, the rearing of a child, training of a child, education, instruction; even correction and chastisement.
 2. Ready for this... it is the whole training and education of children which involves the cultivation of mind and morals, commands and admonitions, reproof and punishment, correcting mistakes and curbing the passions, and the increase of virtue. (Thayer’s Greek – English Lexicon)
 3. This nurturing and discipline can be challenging; however, it is meant to be in-line with God’s Word and God’s Way. (Prov.22:6)
 4. Again, remember that the path has already been chosen by God, and it is our responsibility to teach our children and guide them on the path of righteousness in accordance with God’s Word.

5. Even though we teach them God's truths, please know that every child must choose for themselves which path they will embrace.

d.) What is the "Instruction of the Lord?"

1. Instruction (def.) means to admonish, to warn, to counsel, to exhort; to improve a person's reasoning in order to reach God's solution; to receive God's thoughts and teachings.
2. The counsel is specific in the way of the Lord, not left to the individual, and not determined by any other source other than God.
3. One of the great temptations today is not counseling our children in the way of the world, for the world is fiercely running in the opposite direction from God's Word.
4. Let us help our children run fiercely towards God.
5. How? By purposely establishing a spiritual legacy in our homes, by embracing God's Word for us personally and living it out publicly, and through the counsel of God's Word in our daily family lives!

e.) Two biblical examples:

1. Abraham (Gen.18:19) – "For I have chosen him (Abraham), so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice..."
2. Timothy (2Tim.3:15) – "and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you wisdom and lead to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

f.) As parents, we long that our children will grow in this life in ever God-honoring way!

1. Growing in Love for God and for others
2. Growing in faith and trust in God
3. Growing in victorious and triumphant lives
4. Growing in the Spirit and in boldness
5. Growing in obedience and in service to our Savior
6. Growing in integrity and in humility before God.
7. Growing in truth, mercy, and grace,
8. Growing in patience and in perseverance (to name a few!)

g.) May God help us as we nurture our children for the Lord.

Conclusion:

1. As we work to raise our children and grandchildren in today's society, we need discernment, a divine discernment to nurture our children for the Lord!
2. As parents, may we be fully committed to the task entrusted to us to raise our children for the Lord! May our spiritual legacy be a priority to us in our family.

The Biblical Foundation to Family Worship Series
“The Spiritual Legacy of Family Worship Begins with a Choice”
Joshua 24:1-16

Introduction:

1. Is it really that simple? A “choice?” In our text, Joshua charged the people to make a single decision, and from that decision would flow limitless blessings or continual chastisement. A Single choice that can make all the difference for a person, a marriage, a family, a church, and a nation.
2. As we have traced the importance of family worship from God’s Word through the church father, reformers, puritans, and now into the 21st century.
 - a. Don Carson (b.1946), a New Testament scholar, affirms the needs for families to commit to a family worship time. He encourages parents to create a pattern for the home of Bible reading and prayer beyond grace at meals. He encourages both individual and corporate devotions within the home and believes that “as a family we daily seek God’s face.” (Donald Whitney, *Family Worship*, 42)
 - b. John Piper (b.1946) emphasizes the parents need to rise above their difficult circumstances and embrace their God-given responsibility to disciple their children in the home. Piper wrote, “You have to decide how important you think these family moments are. It is possible – for little ones and teenagers and parents. You may have to work at it. But it can be done.” (Whitney, 42)
3. A legacy, by definition, is “anything handed down from the past, as from an ancestor or predecessor.” (Brian Hayes, “*The Legacy Path*”, pg.3.)
4. A spiritual legacy is equipping a “*new generation of Christ-followers who live to love God passionately and to love people practically in every aspect of life.*” (Haynes, p.9.)
5. A spiritual legacy has the ability to impact your children, your grandchildren, and many more generations to follow.
6. A spiritual legacy can impact your families for their present lives and especially for their eternities. Isn’t that what every parent and grandparents hopes and prays for... that we will spend eternity in the presence of our Savior Jesus Christ AND that we will spend this eternity with our families at our side... together... in heaven... with God!
7. Let us look into the setting where Joshua calls for the elders of Israel to assemble and listen in as he charges them to make a decision...

I. A Spiritual Legacy Begins with a Single Decision

a.) A Call to the Elders to Remember God's Faithfulness (vs.1-13)

1. Vs.1 – Joshua calls the elders of the tribes of Israel together.
2. Vs.2 – Joshua shares a history lesson with the elders to remind them of God's faithfulness to the people of Israel.
 - a.) Abraham, Isaac, Jacob
 - b.) Moses, Aaron, Plagues, exodus, red sea
 - c.) Victories: Amorites, Moabites, Jericho, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites, Jebusites...
 - d.) Balaam hired to curse, instead blessed Israel...
3. Vs.13 – Joshua reminds the people of God's blessings to Israel as they inherited a land that they have not toiled over and cities that they have not built.
4. Just as the elders are charged to remember God's faithfulness, let us learn from this and be purposeful in remembering and sharing God's faithfulness with our families.
5. I challenge you this week to share a testimony of God's faithfulness with your family that you have not yet shared with them.

b.) The Charge to the People to be Faithful towards God (vs.14)

1. Joshua charges the elders to Fear God.
 - a.) Fear of God has a positive and negative meaning...
 - b.) Positive – reverence, honor, holy awe of God
 - c.) Negative – dread of God's judgment
2. Joshua charges the elders to Serve God.
 - a.) We will serve someone or something.
 - b.) It is what we give our time and resources to now...
 - c.) Let us be found faithful to serving our great God!
3. Joshua charges the elders to Put Away All Idols.
4. God does not share... nor should He have to. We must make a decision to serve the one true God! (Mt.6:24- No man can serve two masters...")

c.) Man's Faithfulness Begins with a Choice (vs.15)

1. This Choice must be Personal.
 - a.) The elders must first make the choice for themselves before they can go back to their tribes and families and lead them as well.

- b.) Joshua declares the choice that he has personally made...
“as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”
 - 2. This Choice must be a Priority.
 - a.) Joshua says to “choose today...”
 - b.) Today, now, it is time to settle this decision...
 - c.) No more putting this off to another time.
 - 3. This Choice must be Decisive.
 - a.) The elders were charged to decide who they were going to serve... either God, Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...
 - b.) Or they must declare that they would serve the foreign gods of the lands that they inhabit.
 - c.) This teaches us that there is no middle ground. There is no neutrality in the topic of who we are going to serve. It must either be the one true God, or it will be the false gods of society.
 - 4. The Spiritual Legacy and it that it potentially holds for our families begins at this point. Not to make a decision is a decision in itself. All the fruit that we long for in the lives of our children and future generations can begin right here!
 - 5. Ex.- Fear of Failure sometimes prevents us from even trying. For your family sake... try!
- d.) The Single Choice is Realized through a Strong Commitment (vs.16-28)**
 - 1. Joshua not only extended a challenge to the elders of Israel, but he also challenged their initial decision. (vs.19)
 - 2. The only way that we will accomplish what we have decided is by being committed to that decision no matter what...
 - 3. So then, what happens if we fail to keep our commitment?
 - a.) Confession and Repentance
 - b.) Have a Family Discussion to Reset the Family Priorities
 - c.) Get back up and start again... and again... and again. As many times as it takes to keep the family devotion time in the home until we are home in glory.
 - 4. Vs.25 – Joshua made a Covenant with the people... to serve God faithfully.
 - 5. Would we be willing to make a covenant with God to fear Him and serve Him? Would we make a covenant with God to have a

daily time of Bible reading and prayer in our families? Is the thought of a spiritual legacy worth the covenant? This is a decision that each of us must make for ourselves and for our families.

Conclusion:

1. The idea of a spiritual legacy sounds wonderful... to think that we can start something today in the life of our family that will have the potential impact upon generations to follow for their lives and especially for their eternity.
2. A spiritual legacy simply begins with a choice, but the depth of the legacy will be directly connected to our commitment to daily family devotion times.
3. Ex.- Covenant Stone (Joshua 24)
4. "I enter into a covenant with God today to do my best to have a daily time of Bible reading and pray in my personal life and in our family."

The Biblical Foundation to Family Worship Series
"The Spiritual Legacy of Family Worship Puts a Plan into Action"
Deut.6:4-7 / Eph.6:4 / Josh.24:14-15

Introduction:

1. As we move into our final message of this series, let us once again hear from a couple contemporary pastors, authors, and fathers who have guided us in this process these past five weeks:
 - a. Dr. Donald Whitney, the author of *Family Worship* has also written, "If the homes are changed through family worship, the church will be changed." (Whitney, 35) How simple and yet extremely powerful. The most influential way to impact the church is by focusing on our personal lives and our homes.
 - b. Dr. Timothy Paul Jones wrote, "Leaders... have recognized that a few hours in church each week are insufficient to train children and youth... Churches must partner with mothers and fathers so that parents learn to make the most of these hours." (Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 159)
 - c. Have we as parents come to realize the great privilege and responsibility that we have in regards to discipling our children in the home? This is our God-given task, and He has also given us the manual to work from... His Word.
2. Today, let us put the plan of action into practice. The best made plans of man fail if they never leave the starting gate.

3. Before we go any further... let me revisit a real concern that arises in the minds of parents over and over... "what if I fail?" What if we start and it does not go well? What if we start, and then we get busy and we stop?
4. "A righteous man falls seven times, and rises again. (Prov. 24:16)
5. Do not allow the enemy to defeat us without effort on our part to initiate something of great value to our families. Fight for this victory. Make personal and family devotion time a priority on a daily basis.
6. My hope today is that the desire of our hearts and the decisions we long to make will become practical and a reality for each of our homes.

I. The Foundation has been Determined by God's Word.

- a.) Scripture Reveals that the Parents are to be the Primary Disciple-makers in the Home. (Duet.6:1-9)
 1. Discipleship must be Personal to the Parent.
 2. Discipleship must be Lived Out Publicly.
 3. Discipleship must be Purposefully Taught to the children.
- b.) Scripture Reveals that God's Way is the Right Way. (Prov.22:6)
 1. A Commitment to God's Way has the Ability to Impact our Children's Present as well as their Future.
- c.) Scripture Reveals that a Spiritual Legacy is Possible. (Psalm 78:1-8)
 1. Spiritual Legacy Begins with God's Word in the Parent's Life.
 2. A Spiritual Legacy can be Passed On to the Future Generations.
 3. There is Fruit to Obedience.
- d.) Scripture Instructs the Parents to Disciple their Children. (Ephesian 6:4)
 1. Discipling Children for the Lord Requires Discernment and Dedication.
- e.) The foundation for a Spiritual Legacy will be Directly Impacted by the Parent's Commitment to Personal and Family Devotion Time. May we Embrace our God-given Responsibility to Disciple our Children for the Lord.

II. The Challenge has been Declared through God's Word.

- a.) A Spiritual Legacy Begins with a Single Decision (Joshua 24:14-15)
 1. God's Faithfulness Challenges Us to be Faithful in Return
 2. A Strong Commitment to this Single Decision can Create a Spiritual Legacy for Generations to Come.

3. What Decision have we made? Will we Fear God? Will we Serve God? Will we give God's Word the Proper place in our lives and our homes?
 4. We make time for what is important to us! Make God a Priority! Make God THE Priority! Make God YOUR Priority!
- b.) Covenant Stone (Joshua 24)

III. It is Time to Disciple the Children with God's Word.

- a.) Personal Devotion Time
 1. Josh.1:8; Ps.1:1-2
 2. Rom.12:1-2; 2Cor.4:16
 3. Col.3:10; Eph.4:22-24
- b.) Family Devotion Time
 1. The principles that are true for me as an individual will be true for us as a family!
 2. Pick a time, pick a location, share the responsibility, be consistent, & be flexible.
 3. The purpose of devotions is to get the Word of God in us, to transform our thinking and our desires, to conform us to the image of Jesus!

Conclusion:

1. Family Devotion Testimony (Norman & Linda Hare)
 - a. How often do you get together with your family?
 - b. Can you share with us what you do when your family has a devotion time?
 - c. Have you ever experienced any hiccups or roadblocks to this time?
 - d. What blessings have you seen through this process?
2. Family Devotional Guide
 - a. Bible Memorization
 - b. Bible Principle
 - c. Bible Reading
 - d. Bible Discussion
 - e. Prayer
3. Once again, find your Covenant Stone (Josh.24) and work at it daily!

APPENDIX 7

THE FAMILY DEVOTION GUIDE

The 13-week family devotion guide was designed to equip families to initiate and deepen their family worship experience within the home. Included is a two-week sample of the guide as well as the family resource page that is included at the end of the booklet.

Family Devotional Guide Instructions:

1. Select a time and a place where your family can gather together for 10 to 15 minutes each day to review the elements of the devotions.
2. The **Bible Memorization** is a passage of Scripture that the family will work on each week. It is good to review the passage a couple times a day, and even to be creative in helping children memorize God's Word. It is helpful to learn a verse one phrase of a verse at a time. Children may take several days before they learn the entire verse. Be patient and encouraging. (If the children are very young, help them learn a shorter phrase rather than the whole passage.)
3. The **Bible Principles** are in a Question / Answer format. The parent asks the question, and the children give the response. This practice helps children with foundational truths in Scripture.
4. The **Bible Reading** will be different each day. You have the option to read the entire chapter, or to read the passage of focus. You can involve your children's assistance in reading as well.
5. The **Bible Discussion** element is a time of reflection. You can ask the questions before the reading to help the children to listen for the answers. This section will also allow for deeper conversations and comprehension. Encourage the children with each of their given answers, and lead them in deeper understanding of the readings.
6. The **Closing Prayer** time is a good opportunity to review different principles from the memory verse, the Bible principle, the Bible reading or discussion questions. Encourage family members to assist with this time, with children taking turns on different days. Ask for prayer requests from the family, and use the devotional guide to write down the requests each day.
7. When the devotional time has concluded, **check the box** next to the day of the week to help keep track of your devotions
8. It is helpful to review Bible verses from previous weeks to encourage faithful memorization.
9. Helpful Hint to Bible Memorization: Write out the Bible memorization verse for the children; however, leave a blank space for nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Feel free to give the first letter of those words to help children recall their memory verses. (See examples below...)

Example A: (repeat each phrase until they feel comfortable, then add on the next phrase)

Matthew 6:9-1

Phrase 1 - *“Pray, then, in this way:*

Phrase 2 - *Our Father who is in heaven,* (say phrase 1 and 2 together...)

Phrase 3 - *hallowed be Your Name.* (say phrases 1, 2, and 3 together...)

Phrase 4 - *Your kingdom come.* (say phrases 1 through 4 together...)

Phrase 5 - *Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

Example B: (for younger children)

*Matthew 6:9-10 – “P_____, then, in this w_____: Our F_____ who is in h_____,
h_____ be Your N_____. Your k_____ c_____. Your w_____ be d_____, on
e_____ as it is in h_____.”*

Example C: (for older children)

*Matthew 6:9-10 – “_____, then, in this _____: Our _____ who is in _____,
_____ be Your N_____. Your _____ _____ . Your _____ be _____, on
_____ as it is in _____.”*

WEEK ONE: SUNDAY

Bible Memorization:

Matthew 6:9-10 – “Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Bible Principles:

Question 1: Who made you?

Answer: God made me.

Question 2: What else did God make?

Answer: God made all things.

Bible Reading:

Primary Reading – John 1

Focus – John 1:19-34

Bible Discussion:

1. Why did John think that he was unworthy to untie Jesus’ sandals? (v.27)
2. Why did John call Jesus the “Lamb of God?” (v.29)
3. What does it mean to be baptized with the Holy Spirit? (v.33)

Prayer Requests:

Week One: MONDAY

Bible Memorization:

Matthew 6:9-10 – “Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Bible Principles:

Question 1: Who made you?

Answer: God made me.

Question 2: What else did God make?

Answer: God made all things.

Bible Reading:

Primary Reading - John 2

Focus – John 2:13-22

Bible Discussion:

1. Why did Jesus drive out the people that were selling animals in the temple? (v.15)
2. What temple was Jesus talking about that would be raised in three days? (v.19)
3. Why is it important to believe what Jesus says? (v.22)

Closing Prayer: A.C.T.S. – Adoration... Confession... Thanksgiving... Supplication...

Week One: TUESDAY

Bible Memorization:

Matthew 6:9-10 – “Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Bible Principles:

Question 1: Who made you?
Answer: God made me.

Question 2: What else did God make?
Answer: God made all things.

Bible Reading:

Primary Reading - John 3

Focus – John 3:1-18

Bible Discussion:

1. How did Nicodemus know that Jesus was sent from God? (v.2)
2. What does Jesus mean to be “born again”? (v.3, 7)
3. How did God prove His love for each of us? (v.16)

Prayer Requests:

Week One: WEDNESDAY

Bible Memorization:

Matthew 6:9-10 – “Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Bible Principles:

Question 1: Who made you?

Answer: God made me.

Question 2: What else did God make?

Answer: God made all things.

Bible Reading:

Primary Reading - John 4

Focus – John 4:7-14

Bible Discussion:

1. What “gift of God” was Jesus talking about? (v.10)
2. What is eternal life? (v.14)

Closing Prayer: A.C.T.S. – Adoration... Confession... Thanksgiving... Supplication...

Week One: THURSDAY



Bible Memorization:

Matthew 6:9-10 – “Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Bible Principles:

Question 1: Who made you?

Answer: God made me.

Question 2: What else did God make?

Answer: God made all things.

Bible Reading:

Primary Reading - John 5

Focus – John 5:1-9

Bible Discussion:

1. Why do you think the blind, lame man did not have anyone to help him? (v.7)
2. How did Jesus have the power to heal the blind, lame man? (v.8-9)

Prayer Requests:

Week One: FRIDAY

Bible Memorization:

Matthew 6:9-10 – “Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Bible Principles:

Question 1: Who made you?

Answer: God made me.

Question 2: What else did God make?

Answer: God made all things.

Bible Reading:

Primary Reading - John 6 Focus – John 6:1-14

Bible Discussion:

1. Why would Jesus give thanks to God for the food they were about to eat? (v.11)
2. Why did the people think that Jesus was a prophet? (v.14)

Closing Prayer: A.C.T.S. – Adoration... Confession... Thanksgiving... Supplication...

Week One: SATURDAY

Bible Memorization:

Matthew 6:9-10 – “Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Bible Principles:

Question 1: Who made you?

Answer: God made me.

Question 2: What else did God make?

Answer: God made all things.

Bible Reading:

Primary Reading - John 7 Focus – John 7:32-39

Bible Discussion:

1. Where was Jesus going to go where the people could not follow Him or find Him? (v.34)
2. What did Jesus mean to “believe in Him”? (v.38)

Prayer Requests:

WEEK TWO: SUNDAY

Bible Memorization:

Matthew 6:11-13 – “Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

Bible Principles:

Question 3: Why did God make you and all things?

Answer: God made all things for His own glory.

Question 4: How can you glorify God?

Answer: By loving Him and obeying His commands.

Bible Reading:

Primary Reading - John 8

Focus – John 8:12-30

Bible Discussion:

1. What does it mean to “walk in darkness”? (v.12)
2. Why must a person believe in Jesus in order for their sins to be forgiven? (v.24)

Closing Prayer: A.C.T.S. – Adoration... Confession... Thanksgiving... Supplication...

Week Two: MONDAY

Bible Memorization:

Matthew 6:11-13 – “Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

Bible Principles:

Question 3: Why did God make you and all things?

Answer: God made all things for His own glory.

Question 4: How can you glorify God?

Answer: By loving Him and obeying His commands.

Bible Reading:

Primary Reading - John 9

Focus – John 9:1-12

Bible Discussion:

1. How can the works of God be displayed through this healing? (v.3)
2. What does it mean that Jesus is the “Light of the world”? (v.5)

Prayer Requests:

Week Two: TUESDAY

Bible Memorization:

Matthew 6:11-13 – “Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

Bible Principles:

Question 3: Why did God make you and all things?

Answer: God made all things for His own glory.

Question 4: How can you glorify God?

Answer: By loving Him and obeying His commands.

Bible Reading:

Primary Reading - John 10

Focus – John 10:1-18

Bible Discussion:

1. Why does Jesus mean when He said that He is the Door? (v.9)
2. What does Jesus mean when He said that He is the Good Shepherd? (v.14)

Closing Prayer: A.C.T.S. – Adoration... Confession... Thanksgiving... Supplication...Week Two: WEDNESDAY **Bible Memorization:**

Matthew 6:11-13 – “Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

Bible Principles:

Question 3: Why did God make you and all things?

Answer: God made all things for His own glory.

Question 4: How can you glorify God?

Answer: By loving Him and obeying His commands.

Bible Reading:

Primary Reading - John 11

Focus – John 11:17-46

Bible Discussion:

1. How can a person still live even after they die? (v.25)
2. Why did Jesus pray His prayer aloud so that other people could hear what he said? (v.42)

Prayer Requests:

Week Two: THURSDAY

Bible Memorization:

Matthew 6:11-13 – “Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

Bible Principles:

Question 3: Why did God make you and all things?

Answer: God made all things for His own glory.

Question 4: How can you glorify God?

Answer: By loving Him and obeying His commands.

Bible Reading:

Primary Reading - John 12

Focus – John 12:1-11

Bible Discussion:

1. Why did Mary use a very expensive perfume to anoint Jesus? (v.3)
2. How can we help those who are poor? (v.8)

Closing Prayer: A.C.T.S. – Adoration... Confession... Thanksgiving... Supplication...

Week Two: FRIDAY

Bible Memorization:

Matthew 6:11-13 – “Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

Bible Principles:

Question 3: Why did God make you and all things?

Answer: God made all things for His own glory.

Question 4: How can you glorify God?

Answer: By loving Him and obeying His commands.

Bible Reading:

Primary Reading - John 13

Focus – John 13:5-20

Bible Discussion:

1. Why would Jesus wash the dirty feet of His disciples? (v.5, 8)
2. What does Jesus want us to do for others? (v.14)

Prayer Requests:

Week Two: SATURDAY

Bible Memorization:

Matthew 6:11-13 – “Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

Bible Principles:

Question 3: Why did God make you and all things?

Answer: God made all things for His own glory.

Question 4: How can you glorify God?

Answer: By loving Him and obeying His commands.

Bible Reading:

Primary Reading - John 14

Focus – John 14:1-6

Bible Discussion:

1. Where is Jesus preparing a place for other Christians? (v.2)
2. What does Jesus mean that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life? (v.6)

Closing Prayer: A.C.T.S. – Adoration... Confession... Thanksgiving... Supplication...

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ABSTRACT

TRAINING PARENTS AT BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, TO PRACTICE FAMILY WORSHIP

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018
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The purpose of the project was to teach the fundamental truths of God's Word for His design for the Christian family, to increase the knowledge of God's expectations on parents resulting in faithful practice of Bible reading, prayer, Bible principles (catechisms), and Scripture memorization, and to equip the parents to lead their children in the daily practice of worship with confidence.

The project was designed to lay the biblical foundation for the parents clear understanding that God has commanded for parents to lead their children in their spiritual growth. The Scriptures selected clearly reveal God's design and imperative to the parents to purposely and faithfully teach God's truth to their families.

The project reached into history to reveal that from the early church of Acts, through the churches of the reformation and puritan periods, and into contemporary churches of the present age, that family worship had been a vital part of the Christian home. For some, family worship is a foreign element, but church history reveals that it was a faithfully practiced discipline that yielded spiritual fruit in the lives of the children, the homes, and the churches. The project offers a variety of formats for future use that can be followed to equip parents and to engage God's Word in the life of the home and in the lives of the children.

The project revealed the increase of knowledge of God's design for the family

through the process of preaching on Sunday mornings. The project developed and equipped the parents with a practical guide for leading in basic family worship as well as offering additional resources to go deeper in their walk with Christ as individuals, couples, parents, and as a family.

VITA

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EDUCATION

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ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

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