

“Family Worship”
Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Ephesians 6:4
(Preached at Trinity, Father’s Day, June 18, 2017)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As you know, I seldom depart from our regular expository schedule, so I should be telling you to turn to the Book of Philippians. But this morning is Father’s Day, so I’d like to preach on a subject that is of great importance, and unfortunately, often of great neglect. This morning I want to address the subject of family worship. I preached a similar sermon 13 years ago back in 2004. It is generational—it needs to be preached to every generation.
2. In our generation, most fathers consider quality family time times of recreation. There’s soccer and baseball, swimming and picnics, shopping and spending. We consider ourselves successful parents if our children are kept constantly entertained.
3. The spiritual dimension of our children is given little priority. The things of this world tend to take front stage. The glory of God is relegated to a place of insignificance. Few families take time for family worship, opportunities where the glories of Christ can be displayed. Few Christian families give the matter serious thought. They don’t understand the importance.
4. Our forefathers understood the importance.
 - A. The original preface to the 1689 London Confession:
“And verily there is one spring and cause of the decay of religion in our day, which we cannot but touch upon and earnestly urge a redress of; and that is the neglect of the worship of God in families by those to whom the charge and conduct of them is committed. May not the gross ignorance and instability of many with the profaneness of others be justly charged upon their parents and masters, who have not trained them up in the way wherein they ought to walk when they were young? But have neglected those frequent and solemn commands which the Lord hath laid upon them so to catechize and instruct them, that their tender years might be seasoned with the knowledge of the truth of God as revealed in the Scriptures...”
 - B. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland saw it as important, important enough to merit church discipline to those who neglected its practice. In 1647 they published *The Directory of Family Worship* which stated, “The Assembly doth further require and appoint ministers and ruling elders to make diligent search and enquiry, in the congregations committed to their charge respectively, whether there be among them any family or families which use to neglect this necessary duty; and if such family be found, the head of the family is to be first admonished privately to amend his fault; and in case of his continuing therein, he is to be gravely and sadly reproved by the session; after which reproof, if he be found still to neglect Family-worship, let him be for his obstinacy in such an offence, suspended and debarred form the Lord’s Supper.”

- C. In our own Trinity Baptist Church Covenant all who join our church covenant together – We are bound by oath: “That we will not omit secret and family worship at home nor neglect that great duty of religiously training our children, and those under our care, for the service of Christ and the enjoyment of heaven.” Are there any among us who have violated this vow?
5. This morning I want to try to accomplish two things.
First, I want to give you several reasons why we must conduct regular times of family worship
Second, I want to offer some suggestions on how to conduct family worship.
6. These principles apply not only to families with children, but families with just the husband and wife, and it applies to single men and women as well.
“That we will not omit *secret and family worship at home*”

First, Some Reasons Why We Should Engage in Family Worship

- I. To bring glory to God
- A. Family worship brings God the glory He deserves
1. It holds Him up to the highest priority in your home.
It brings God glory when you comprehend His greatness and reflect it with your life. It brings God great glory when you teach your family of His greatness
 2. It brings God great glory when you praise Him as a family
 3. It brings God great glory when families are united in His praise
Romans 15:5-6 NAU - "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
Psalms 29:1-2 KJV - "Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. ² Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."
- C. Is God not the Owner of your family?
1. Should you not devote your family to Him?
 2. Are you guilty of finding time for everything else but no time for God?
- II. To fulfill your duty as head of your home
- A. As a man you were created to exercise headship
1. The headship of Adam is seen in God giving him the command not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil
 2. The headship of Adam is seen in Eve being formed from the body of Adam – In keeping with his headship Adam named or identified the woman interpreting her identity in relation to himself
Genesis 2:23 NAU - "The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."
 3. It was Adam’s responsibility to teach God’s covenant to his wife.
 4. The headship of Adam is seen in his responsibility for the original sin
 - a. Adam *and* Eve sinned but it was Adam’s sin that was passed down to all mankind
 - b. Adam *and* Eve hid themselves but God called out to Adam
Genesis 3:9 – “And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou?”

5. This masculine headship is displayed in marriage
Ephesians 5:22-23 NAU - "Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body."
 6. Fathers must take responsibility for leadership over their children
Ephesians 6:4 NAU - "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."
- B. The role of the husband/father is a high responsibility
1. You are God's agent for the training of your children – Christian fathers must recognize their great duty
 The decline of the family and all of the social woes that accompany it rests in the absence of godly fathers.
 2. Christian fathers need to recognize that their children do not belong to them – they are stewards of God's property
 3. Being a great father demands involvement, energy, effort. The great issue of our day is absentee fathers. This is true even in homes where the father is physically present. They are not actively involved in the lives of their children.
 4. You are training your children – quality time is not just being present or playing with them. It is teaching and training them.
 Fathers, does the Word of God impact your life? Does it impact how you view the world? Does your relationship with Christ have a direct impact upon your life? Are you reflecting this in your home as you lead your families?
 Your children are watching you—how you live before them. They are listening to you pray at home and at the church. Their view of the church is being shaped by you.
 5. J.W. Alexander, eldest son of Archibald Alexander –
 "No man can approach the duty of leading his household in an act of devotion without solemn reflection on the place which he occupies in regard to them. He is their head. He is such by divine and unalterable constitution. These are duties and prerogatives which he cannot alienate. He is their father and master. No act of his and nothing in his character can fail to leave a mark on those around him. This he will be apt to feel when he calls them about him to pray to God. And the more devoutly he addressed himself to the work, the more will he feel it. Though all priesthood, in the proper sense, is not done away on the earth and absorbed in the function of the great High Priest, there is still something like a priestly intervention in the service of the Christian patriarch."

III. To protect your children from sin

A. We must be mindful of the souls of our wives and children

1. Is it of greater importance to prepare our children for physical expertise in sports or to prepare their souls for eternity?
2. Is it of greater importance to prepare for their temporal prosperity than to strive for their spiritual prosperity? Jesus gives the clear answer **Matthew 6:33** – “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
3. Does the Gospel have a place of priority in your home? Do you give careful attention to the souls of your children?
4. Do you understand the importance of keeping God’s Word before your family?

C. You are responsible for the growth of your children

1. Would you withhold food from your children? Would you sit by unconcerned as your children waste away in malnourishment, especially if good food were readily available?
2. What has God appointed for the salvation of their souls?
3. What good is it to surround your children with external riches while their souls fester in sin?
4. Don’t be surprised if you indulge all their whims and allow them to follow their own course that they become vain, proud, idle, and disobedient with no concern for their souls.
 - a. The more you indulge their flesh the more they will despise you.
 - b. Don’t be surprised when they leave your house and flee from your God

IV. To produce real joy in your home

A. Delighting in God is the secret to true happiness

Psalms 1:1-3 – “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. ³ And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

1. The word for “Blessed” is אֲשֶׁר (‘esher) - happiness
2. This happy man meditates upon God’s Law day and night
3. The family that is happy and joyous is not the family that has all of this world’s riches or wears the latest style of clothes or follows the latest trends. It is the family that meditates in God’s Word.

B. Family worship will create a unity like none other

1. God showers such a family with His grace
2. The ills that cause misery and unhappiness will be prevented in a family that remembers and loves God

- V. To comfort during times of trial
- A. The family that worships together knows the bond of love and unity
1. They are accustomed to addressing problems and bringing them before God
 2. Trials are sure to come, but there is great comfort in the home where God is worshipped, where there is love and consolation
 3. Children that are accustomed to sitting at the feet of their parents will be at home before their parents when the trials of life invade their lives
- B. God sends sweet comfort to those who seek Him
1. Paul calls it the peace that passes understanding
 2. David describes this comfort
Psalm 23:4 – “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”
 3. God knows how to raise up the souls of the afflicted
Psalm 145:18-20 – “The LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. ¹⁹ He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them. ²⁰ The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy.”
Psalm 32:10-11 – “Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. ¹¹ Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye *that are* upright in heart. “
- VI. To have a positive influence upon society
- A. We are training children for the future
1. Our children will be the adults of the future – they will mold society
 2. We are teaching them whether to flow with the opinions of men or live by every word of God.
 3. We are teaching them whether to seek happiness in the things of this world or in the things above.
- B. Our world is suffering because it has rejected God
1. Are you teaching your children to march to the beat of the same drum?
 2. Are you teaching your children the virtue of duty – duty whether they are a janitor or a surgeon.
 3. Are you teaching your children the importance of standing upon principle?
Are you teaching them the importance of excellence?
Are you teaching them good habits?
Are you helping them to have a tender conscience?
 4. These things will be strengthened through family worship.

Some Suggestions on How to Conduct Family Worship

1. Maintain consistency – this is the hardest part. Don't allow distractions to end your times of family worship.
2. Give attention to the needs of your particular children—they are ever changing. Keep the length and content appropriate to the ages of the children. Too long leads to boredom and may provoke them to wrath. As they get older address themes particular to their lives.
3. When is the best time of the day?
One possible time may be at the supper table. Make it a practice to eat at least one meal together and hold family worship at the conclusion of the meal.
Another possible time is just before bedtime as the day is drawing to a close.
4. Keep Christ as the central focus of your home. Family worship will flow forth naturally.
5. What are some of the elements that can be included in Family Worship
 - Singing of hymns and Psalms
 - Reading of the Scriptures. Memorizing and reciting Scriptures
 - A brief study or discussion on a particular passage
 - The use of the Catechism
 - The reading and discussion of our church's confession of faith
 - Prayer
 - Take time to listen to your children

Conclusion: If you have been remiss in family worship ask God's forgiveness. Pray for his grace in preserving this important aspect of your home life.