

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 & Ephesians 6:4 — “A Mark of Biblical Manhood: A MAN WHO LEADS IN FAMILY WORSHIP”*Introduction*

“The education of children for God is the most important business done on earth. It is the one business for which the earth exists. To it all politics, all war, all literature, all money making ought to be subordinated; and every parent especially ought to feel, every hour of the day, that next to making his own calling and election sure, this is the end for which he is kept alive by God—this is HIS task on earth” (Robert Dabney).

THESIS — I want to give you **THREE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS** so that you can be a man who honors God in teaching & training your children the ways of the LORD.

I. KNOW WHO YOUR GOD IS (4)

Do You Know God?

II. KNOW HOW YOU MUST RELATE TO YOUR GOD (5-6)

Do You Love God?

Note the **order** in which God lays this central section out: (1) you must know who God is; (2) you must love God with every fiber in your being; (3) then you must train and bring up your sons/daughters in the ways of the LORD.

III. KNOW YOUR MANDATE BY GOD TO TEACH YOUR CHILDREN (7-9, 20-25)

Do You Obey God?

As one writer said: “Train up a child in the way he should go—but be sure you go that way yourself.”

Mark it! The home is to be the *primary* place for family worship and bible learning—not the Church.

The church is helpful! The church is essential! The church is absolutely needed! It is crucial! *BUT*, the Church must never take the place of family teaching, family catechizing, and discipleship in the home.

Joshua 24:15 — As for me & my house, we WILL serve the LORD.

Regarding Deuteronomy 6:6-9 on teaching Christ *at all times in the home:*

“Our common talk should be much more spiritual than it often is. There is no fear of degrading sacred subjects by the frequent use of them; the fear lies much the other way, lest by a disuse of them we come to forget them. This blessed Book, the Holy Word of God, is a fit companion for your leisure as well as for your labor; for the time of your sleeping and the time of your waking. It will bless you in your private meditations, and equally cheer the social hearth, and comfort you when in mutual friendship you speak the one with the other. Those who truly love God greatly love his holy Word.”

Family Worship:

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“They that pray in the family do well; they that pray and read the Scriptures do better; but they that pray, and read, and sing do best of all” (Matthew Henry).

There is a completeness in that kind of family worship which is much to be desired. This can include training, instruction, prayer, confession, catechism, thanksgiving & intercession.

JC Ryle exhorts us: "Fill their minds with Scripture. Let the Word dwell in them richly. Give them the Bible, the whole Bible, even while they are young."

It can be simple: Family Worship (= *the family gathered together worships God consistently*):

Those families wherein this service of God [family worship] is performed, are (as it were) little churches, yea, even a kind of Paradise upon earth (William Perkins).

The more we worship God in secret, the fitter shall we be for family worship, and the more we worship God in our families, the fitter shall we be for public worship (John Angier).

Family Worship can consist in the following –

1. Reading (Prov 2.1; Titus 2.15)
2. Praying (Eph 6.18; Jer 10.25)
3. Singing (Ps 118:15)

Fathers—Train Up Your Sons & Daughters:

Similar words of exhortation to fathers is found in Deut 11:18-20; Psalm 78:1-8.

Proverbs 22:6 — Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:15 — Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

Proverbs 2:1-22 (*note the advice here from Solomon to his young son Rehoboam).

Jonathan Edwards—one of America's most brilliant thinkers and theologians—wrote in the 1700's:

“Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church, consecrated to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by His rules. And family education and order are some of the chief of the means of grace”

By God's grace, we do well to grow in our zeal in this area:

"Family worship, in family study of Scripture, in family prayer, in family attendance at the services of the church, in the family witness to a community, and in the family's direct relationship with God in doing the work that He has called them to do as individuals and as a family, You would expect to see great zeal for the training of the children in the knowledge and ways of God. Yet here is where husbands fail most miserably. How often it is that the wife is the sole impetus in the family for these things" (Jay Adams).

Objections Raised & Answered:**1) You may be thinking: "But, my children are TOO young for this..."**

The expression might be better understood if we read it "from a babe". It does not mean a well-grown child, or youth, but a child just rising out of infancy. From a very child Timothy had known the sacred writings. This expression is, no doubt, used to show that we cannot begin too early to IMBUE the minds of our children with Scriptural knowledge. Babes receive impressions LONG before we are aware of the fact. During the first months of a child's life it learns more than we imagine. It soon learns the love of its mother, and its own dependence; and if the mother be wise, it learns the meaning of obedience and the necessity of yielding its will to a higher will. This may be the key-note of its whole future life. If it learn obedience and submission early, it may save a thousand tears from the child's eyes, and as many from the mother's heart. A special vantage-ground is lost when even babyhood is left Uncultured and Untrained" (Charles Spurgeon).

"You can't begin with your children TOO soon. They are no sooner weaned but they are to be taught...are they too young, you say? Yet the Devil has already been with them...they go astray as soon as they're born. They no sooner step than they stray ... Satan gets them to be proud, profane, reviling, and revengeful, as young as they are ... why should YOU not be teaching beforehand with them" (Cotton Mather)?

2) "Great thoughts, but my kids are long gone. They moved out and got married years ago."

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“In a word, be such a husband to your believing wife, that she may say, God has not only given me a husband, but such a husband as preaches to me everyday the behavior of Christ to his church by the way he lives” (John Bunyan).

3) “Oh, I’m just so convicted right now...and I don’t even know where to begin to get my life back on track (get the priorities right again).”

Repent of your neglect. Receive the Lord’s sufficient grace! Reconsider your priorities and make the changes necessary!

So -- What now? Where from here? Remember the **‘4 G’s’** —

1. **G**ather the family!
2. **G**rab the Bible!
3. **G**o with simplicity & frequency!
4. **G**et at it tonight!

4) How do I have family worship times? What does it look like?

Pray, read Scripture, talk about it; Apply it! What does this verse teach about God? Jesus? Sin? Godly living? Faith?

Ask thoughtful questions; listen; show genuine interest; be positive and encouraging & biblical.

“Let [godliness] be the principal part of your care and labour in all their education, to make holiness appear to them the most necessary, honourable, gainful, pleasant, and delightful state of life; and to keep them from seeing it either as needless, dishonourable, hurtful, or uncomfortable. Especially draw them to the love of it, by representing it as lovely” (Richard Baxter).

“Those do well that pray morning and evening in their families, those do better that pray and read the scriptures, but those do best that pray and read and sing the psalms” (Philip Henry).

“First, the time of prayer, considered in a general sense, is every day, every opportunity — always. Specific times of prayer are when we engage in it corporately — be it in public gatherings, in private gatherings, or in our individual family worship which ought to be conducted in every Christian family. This ought to occur both morning and evening, and if the opportunity permits it, also at noon. At this time the father — or if he is absent or unable to do this, the mother — must read a chapter, speak about it, catechize children and servants, sing a psalm together, and bow and offer prayer — all in accordance with the ability the Lord grants each one. Joshua desired to serve the Lord with his house (Josh. 24:15), and Cornelius feared God with all his house (Acts 10:2). One must make of his home a small church, for then the

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Lord will bless the home. Children and servants will learn to fear the Lord and thus will experience salvation. It will beget mutual love, there will be mutual respect, restraining everyone from sin, and one will exemplify godliness to each other and follow each other in this way. We must make use of all these opportunities, and take them into consideration, both when praying and when following the example of others” (Wilhelmus A'Brakel).

Conclusion

Samuel Worcester preached a sermon on October 1811 where he dealt with these specific issues. In it, he provided the following exhortations:

“Children should be taught early the important truths of God's Word. They should early be taught that there is a God; that He is a being of infinite power and wisdom, knowledge and goodness, justice, mercy, and truth, One God in three Persons; that He is to be loved with all the heart, and obeyed in all things with the most dutiful respect; that His law is holy, just, and good; that all mankind are by nature sinners, and are exposed to everlasting destruction; that God has freely given His own Son to die for sinners, and to bring in everlasting righteousness for their justification; that everyone ought immediately to repent and embrace the Savior; that all the unconverted reject the mercy of God, and will continue to reject it to their eternal ruin; and that all who are thus renewed and made alive to God will be pardoned and sanctified, and finally received to honor, glory, and immortality.

These and other gospel truths connected with these should be taught to our children with diligence and faithfulness. They are truths which concern their eternal salvation. Nor are we to say that children CANNOT understand them; for it has been found by pleasing experience that, if proper means are used, children will very early get so much knowledge of divine truth as to be of the greatest benefit to them in all their future lives.”

For Further Reading & Study:

Jay Adams, *Christian Living in the Home*

Jason Helopoulos, *Family Worship & Benefits*

Lou Priolo, *Teach them Diligently*

George Whitefield, *The Great Duty of Family Religion*

Don Whitney, *Simplify Family Worship*

Joel Beeke, *Family Worship*

James Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*

R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Family*

Additional Quotes on Discipleship in the Home & Family Worship

J.H. Merle D'Aubigne, 1827

But, my brethren, if the love of God be in your hearts, and if you feel that, being bought with a price, you ought to glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are his, where do you love to glorify him rather than in your families and in your houses? You love to unite with your brethren in worshipping him publicly in the church; you love to pour out your souls before him in your closets. Is it only in the presence of that being with whom God has connected you for life and before your children, that you can not think of God? Is it, then, only, that you have no blessings to ascribe? Is it, then, only, that you have no mercies and protection to implore? You can speak of every thing when with them; your conversation is upon a thousand different matters; but your tongue and your heart can not find room for one word about God! You will not look up as a family to him who is the true Father of your family; you will not converse with your wife and your children about that Being who will one day, perhaps, be the only husband of your wife, the only Father of your children!

Parents! if your children do not meet with a spirit of piety in your houses, if, on the contrary, your pride consists in surrounding them with external gifts, introducing them into worldly society, indulging all their whims, letting them follow their own course, you will see them grow vain, proud, idle, disobedient, impudent, and extravagant! They will treat you with contempt; and the more your hearts are wrapped up in them, the less they will think of you. This is seen but too often to be the case; but ask yourselves if you are not responsible for their bad habits and practices; and your conscience will reply that you are; that you are now eating the bread of bitterness which you have prepared for yourself. May you learn thereby how great has been your sin against God in neglecting the means which were in your power for influencing their hearts; and may others take warning from your misfortune, and bring up their children in the Lord! Nothing is more effectual in doing this than an example of domestic piety.

They are not merely to be taught out of some elementary book that they must love God, but you must show them God is loved. If they observe that no worship is paid to that God of whom they hear, the very best instruction will prove useless; but by means of Family Worship, these young plants will grow "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither."

Rev. M. Simpson, 1882 - The Influence of Family Worship

Family Worship increases the spirit of reverence for God and His Word. Children copy their parents' spirit and example. If parents begin the day by invoking God's blessing, by consecrating the early hour to His service, they show their estimate of the value of worship. If business, society, wealth, and pleasure are deferred for worship, the youth feels that the claims of Deity are above all other claims. Parents thus show that they can do nothing rightly without the divine blessing, and that Divine approval is far more precious than the approval of men. God's Book is

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honored. The Bible is for every day, and for the morning hour of every day. If to the parent it is more precious than gold and sweeter also than the honey and the honey comb, will not the child learn to value a volume so honored and treasured?

John Bunyan - Duties of Fathers and Parents

As touching the spiritual state of his family; he ought to be very diligent and circumspect, doing his utmost endeavour both to increase faith where it is begun, and to begin it where it is not. Wherefore, to this end, he ought diligently and frequently to lay before his household such things of God, out of his word, as are suitable for each particular.

Thy children have souls, and they must be begotten of God as well as of thee, or they perish. And know also, that unless thou be very circumspect in thy behavior to and before them, they may perish through thee: the thoughts of which should provoke thee, both to instruct, and also to correct them.

Matthew Henry – Commentary

"Masters of families, who preside in the other affairs of the house, must go before their households in the things of God. They must be as prophets, priests, and kings in their own families; and as such they must keep up family-doctrine, family-worship, and family-discipline: then is there a church in the house, and this is the family religion I am persuading you to. You must read the scriptures to your families, in a solemn manner, requiring their attendance on your reading, and their attention to it: and inquiring sometimes whether they understand what you read? Those masters of families who make conscience of doing this daily, morning and evening, reckoning it part of that which the duty of every day requires, -- I am sure they have comfort and satisfaction in so doing, and find it contributes much to their own improvement in Christian knowledge, and the edification of those that dwell under their shadow;

George Whitefield – Morning and Evening, Part 2

Would then the present generation have their posterity be true lovers and honorers of God; masters and parents must take Solomon's good advice, and train up and catechize their respective households in the way wherein they should go. I am aware but of one objection, that can, with any show of reason, be urged against what has been advanced; which is, that such a procedure as this will take up too much time, and hinder families too long from their worldly business. But it is much to be questioned, whether persons that start such an objection, are not of the same hypocritical spirit as the traitor Judas, who had indignation against devout Mary, for being so profuse of her ointment, in anointing our blessed Lord, and asked why it might not be sold for two hundred pence, and given to the poor. For has God given us so much time to work for ourselves, and shall we not allow some small pittance of it, morning and evening, to be devoted to his more immediate worship and service? Have not people read, that it is God who gives men power to get wealth, and therefore that the best way to prosper in the world, is to

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secure his favor? And has not our blessed Lord himself promised, that if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all outward necessities shall be added unto us?

John Gill – Christian Duty

Husbands duty to wives - In seeking her spiritual welfare; her conversion, if unconverted, and her spiritual peace, comfort, and edification, she being an heir with him of the grace of life; by joining with her in all religious exercises; in family worship, in reading, in prayer, in praise, in Christian conference and conversation; by instructing her in everything relating to doctrine, duty, and church discipline; in answer to questions she may and has a right to ask him at home (1 Cor. 14:35).

Parents duty to children - It is proper to instruct them in the necessity of faith in God and in Christ, and of the use of prayer; and to lay before them the sinfulness of sin, and show them what an evil thing it is, and what are the sad effects of it; to teach them their miserable estate by nature, and the way of recovery and salvation by Christ; and to learn them from childhood to read and know the holy scriptures, according to their capacity; and by these to be "admonished" of sin, and of their duty, to fear God, and keep his commandments; which may be meant by the "admonition of the Lord"; and the proper opportunity should be taken to instil these things into their minds.

The Puritan Directory of Family Worship

The ordinary duties comprehended under the exercise of piety which should be in families, when they are convened to that effect, are these: First, Prayer and praises performed with a special reference, as well to the publick condition of the kirk of God and this kingdom, as to the present case of the family, and every member thereof. Next, Reading of the scriptures, with catechising in a plain way, that the understandings of the simpler may be the better enabled to profit under the publick ordinances, and they made more capable to understand the scriptures when they are read; together with godly conferences tending to the edification of all the members in the most holy faith: as also, admonition and rebuke, upon just reasons, from those who have authority in the family.

The head of the family is to take care that none of the family withdraw himself from any part of family-worship: and, seeing the ordinary performance of all the parts of family-worship belongeth properly to the head of the family, the minister is to stir up such as are lazy, and train up such as are weak, to a fitness to these exercises;

On the Lord's day, after every one of the family apart, and the whole family together, have sought the Lord (in whose hands the preparation of men's hearts are) to fit them for the publick worship, and to bless to them the publick ordinances, the master of the family ought to take care that all within his charge repair to the publick worship, that he and they may join with the rest of the congregation: and the publick worship being finished, after prayer, he should take an account what they have heard; and thereafter, to spend the rest of the time which they may

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spare in catechising, and in spiritual conferences upon the word of God: or else (going apart) they ought to apply themselves to reading, meditation, and secret prayer, that they may confirm and increase their communion with God: that so the profit which they found in the publick ordinances may be cherished and promoted, and they more edified unto eternal life.

J.I. Packer – Of Vital Importance

But family worship was also, to the Puritans, vitally important. Daily and indeed twice daily, the Puritans recommended, the family as a family should hear the Word read, and pray to God.

John Knox – Giving Account

Brethren, you are ordained of God to rule your own houses in his true fear, and according to his word. Within your houses, I say, in some cases, you are bishops and kings; your wife, children, servants, and family are your bishopric and charge. Of you it shall be required how carefully and diligently you have instructed them in God's true knowledge, how you have studied to plant virtue in them, and [to] repress vice. And therefore I say, you must make them partakers in reading, exhorting, and in making common prayers, which I would in every house were used once a day at least. But above all things, dear brethren, study to practice in life that which the Lord commands, and then be you assured that you shall never hear nor read the same without fruit.

Jonathan Edwards – Every Christian Family a Little Church,

Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church, consecrated to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by his rules. And family education and order are some of the chief means of grace. If these fail, all other means are likely to prove ineffectual. If these are duly maintained, all the means of grace will be likely to prosper and be successful. Let me now therefore, once more, before I finally cease to speak to this congregation, repeat, and earnestly press the counsel which I have often urged on the heads of families, while I was their pastor, to great painfulness in teaching, warning, and directing their children; bringing them up in the training and admonition of the Lord; beginning early, where there is yet opportunity, and maintaining constant diligence in labors of this kind.

Remember that, as you would not have all your instructions and counsels ineffectual, there must be government as well as instructions, which must be maintained with an even hand, and steady resolution, as a guard to the religion and morals of your family, and the support of its good order. Take heed that it not be with any of you as it was with Eli of old, who reprov'd his children, but restrained them not; and that, by this means, you do not bring the like curse on your families as he did on his.

AW Pink – Disregarding Duty

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On the other hand, we may observe what fearful threatenings are pronounced against those who disregard this duty. We wonder how many of our readers have seriously pondered those awe-inspiring words "Pour out Thy fury upon the heathen that know Thee not, and upon the families that call not on Thy name" (Jer. 10:25)! How unspeakably solemn to find that prayerless families are here coupled with the heathen that know not the Lord. Yet need that surprise us? Why there are many heathen families who unite together in worshiping their false gods. And do not they put thousands of professing Christians to shame? Observe too that Jer. 10:25 recorded a fearful imprecation upon both classes alike: "Pour out Thy fury upon ..." How loudly should these words speak to us. It is not enough that we pray as private individuals in our closets; we are required to honor God in our families as well. At least twice each day—in the morning and in the evening—the whole household should be gathered together to bow before the Lord—parents and children, master and servant—to confess their sins, to give thanks for God's mercies, to seek His help and blessing. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with this duty: all other domestic arrangements are to bend to it. The head of the house is the one to lead the devotions. but if he be absent, or seriously ill, or an unbeliever, then the wife should take his place. Under no circumstances should family worship be omitted. If we would enjoy the blessing of God upon our family then let its members gather together daily for praise and prayer. "Them that honour Me I will honour" is His promise.