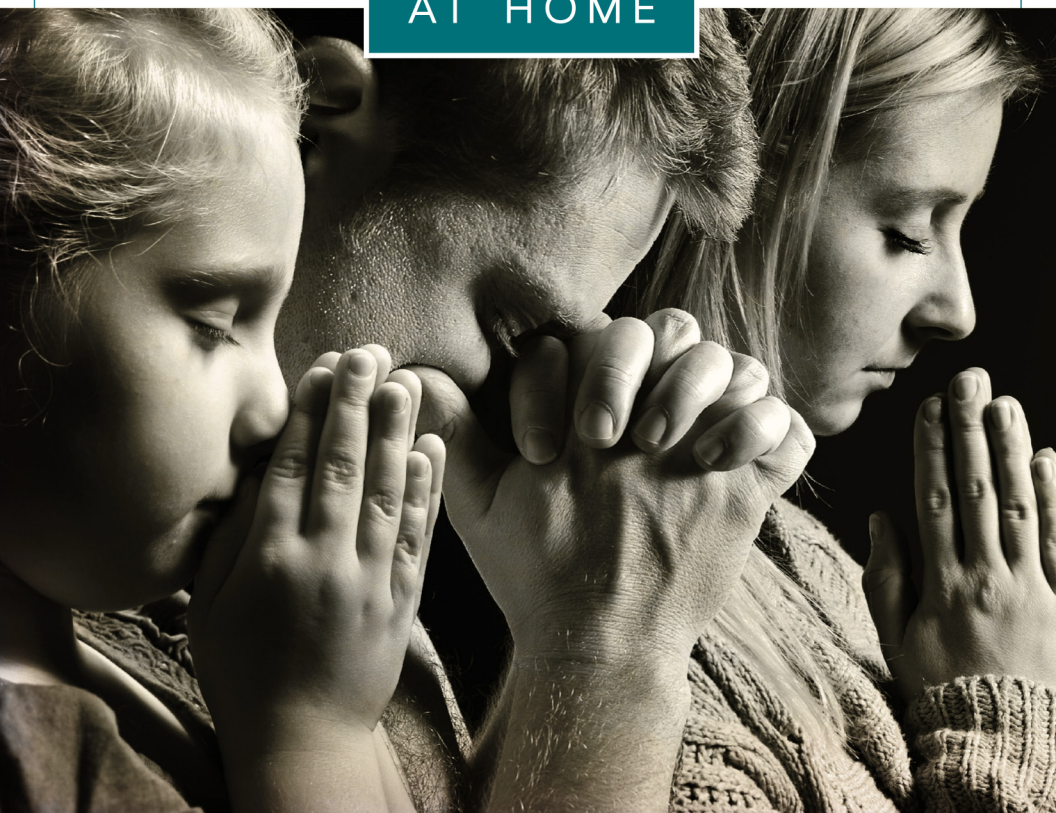


FAMILY WORSHIP

The Foundation of Discipleship

AT HOME



MAN OF THE WORD MANUAL • FALL 2015

FAMILY WORSHIP

THE FOUNDATION OF DISCIPLESHIP AT HOME

MCBC Man of the Word
Fall 2015

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FAMILY WORSHIP

THEME

We must apply Jesus' command to make disciples in our own homes. The foundation for such discipleship is consistent family worship. So, let us renew our commitment to this time-honored practice!

THEME PASSAGE

"For [the Lord] established a testimony in Jacob
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers
That they should teach them to their children,
That the generation to come might know, *even* the children *yet* to be born,
That they may arise and tell *them* to their children,
That they should put their confidence in God
And not forget the works of God,
But keep His commandments . . ."

Psalms 78:5-7

TIME

10 weeks: August 30 – November 7, 2015

GOALS

1. Develop a mutually edifying relationship with my prayer partner through prayer and encouragement.
2. Renew my focus on the duty and delight of family worship.
3. Equip myself with scriptural truth and practices to lead family worship faithfully.

EVENTS

Men's Prayer Breakfasts: August 29, October 3, November 7

Men & Boys Outing at the WILDS: September 19

MY PRAYER PARTNER (NAME, PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL):

MAN OF THE WORD PROGRAM

The leadership of Mount Calvary Baptist Church created the Man of the Word program in obedience to the command of 2 Timothy 2:2: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." This ministry functions under the leadership of Pastor Mark Minnick, Pastor John Tipton, and Chris Baker, elder. The following men are the current Man of the Word officers.

President Dan Dahlhausen

Vice President Dave Howell

Treasurer Jeff Foster

Food Director David Baker

Project Coordinator Jesse Keck

Manual Director Eric Newton

We are grateful to Pastor Mark Minnick for his encouragement and leadership and for his vision for the men of Mount Calvary Baptist Church. We would also like to express our gratitude to the men who have donated their time, energy, and gifts by writing spiritually edifying articles for our growth and encouragement.

PRESIDENT'S BURDEN

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mat. 28:18-20).

Dear Men of Mount Calvary,

Jesus' command to disciple applies to all born-again Christians. Years ago I counseled at a teen camp in Ohio. We asked the teen campers if their families participated consistently in family devotions. I recall my amazement in discovering that almost all indicated that there were NO family devotions at all. The sphere of discipleship most clearly ordained by God is the family. Men, has the Lord given you a wife, or children, or a friend with whom a discipleship relationship would be mutually beneficial?

I know from personal experience how difficult it is to have consistent and profitable family devotions. After much prayer and counsel, the Lord has led me to pursue "Family Worship: The Foundation of Discipleship at Home" as our topic of study and application during the first half of this year. We will emphasize discipleship of other men during the second half.

The benefits of putting this emphasis into practice are out of this world (and also in this world). It is never too early or too late to start. For those who are unmarried with no children, the principles can be applied in various situations now and then differently in the future if God provides a family. It will take some planning and effort since there are many distractions in the world to keep us from this blessing. We need to make the time, or we will fail. Satan is at spiritual war with us using the influences of the world to steal our hearts and the hearts of our family members. What a great blessing that the Lord can use us to influence others through the institution of the family! I pray that this will be a time of encouragement and spiritual growth for each of us and those whom God has put into our lives.

Your brother in Christ,

Dan Dahlhausen

PREFACE

Our theme this cycle and next is *discipleship*. It is a term we know is good but hear applied in a myriad of ways. The premise underlying our focus for this cycle is simple. Making disciples of Jesus Christ should begin in homes, and the foundation of home discipleship is a regular time of family worship.

This booklet, “Family Worship: The Foundation of Discipleship at Home,” is a ten-week study designed to renew your focus on the duty and delight of family worship and equip you with scriptural truth and practices to lead family worship faithfully. Each week’s resources consist of:

- SCRIPTURE READING – A passage pertaining to the week’s article to be read and considered throughout the week (and perhaps used during family worship)
- TRUTH FOR MEDITATION – Verses from the weekly Scripture readings on which to meditate (Try to pray them each day of the week.)
- BOOK READING(S)
 - Joel R. Beeke, *Family Worship*, 2nd ed. (Reformation Heritage Books, 2009)
 - Jason Helopoulos, *A Neglected Grace: Family Worship in the Christian Home* (Christian Focus, 2013)
- QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION – A motivational quote from the book reading that underscores the goals for this cycle
- M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE – A way to keep on track in reading through the Bible in 2015 using the M’Cheyne system
- ARTICLES – Testimonies and devotionals concerning family worship written by Mt. Calvary Baptist Church men

Don’t let these materials become daunting. Let whatever you do be a delight. If you can’t keep up every component, choose the ones that you can use consistently and stick with them.

May we delight in leading our families in worship and come to realize the joy of our children fixing their confidence in God and passing His truth down to future generations!

INTRODUCTION TO FAMILY WORSHIP WEEK 1

August 30 – September 5

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 78

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“For [the LORD] established a testimony in Jacob
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers
That they should teach them to their children,
That the generation to come might know, *even* the children *yet* to be born,
That they may arise and tell *them* to their children,
That they should put their confidence in God
And not forget the works of God,
But keep His commandments . . .”

Psalm 78:5-7

BOOK READING

Family Worship (Beeke): Chapter 1 (6 pgs.)

A Neglected Grace (Helopoulos): Foreword and Introduction (7 pgs.)

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“As goes the home, so goes the church, so goes the nation. Family worship is a most decisive factor in how the home goes” (Beeke, 2).

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Aug 30	1 Sam 23	1 Cor 4	Eze 2	Ps 38
Aug 31	1 Sam 24	1 Cor 5	Eze 3	Ps 39
Sep 1	1 Sam 25	1 Cor 6	Eze 4	Ps 40, 41
Sep 2	1 Sam 26	1 Cor 7	Eze 5	Ps 42, 43
Sep 3	1 Sam 27	1 Cor 8	Eze 6	Ps 44
Sep 4	1 Sam 28	1 Cor 9	Eze 7	Ps 45
Sep 5	1 Sam 29, 30	1 Cor 10	Eze 8	Ps 46, 47

A TRADITION OF TRANSMITTING GOD'S TRUTH

ERIC NEWTON

My family and I took a trip this summer to visit relatives in the Midwest. One of our primary motivations was to spend time with my three living grandparents, all in their late 80's. On an unusually mild July afternoon we found our way to a site I had not visited in 26 years—the small cemetery in northern Illinois where the body of my paternal grandfather was buried. There, surrounded by cornfields, his grave marker sits alongside one for his son Greg, whose death at age 9 in a sledding accident meant I never knew him. Noticing that my uncle's tombstone indicates that he too is in the Lord, I asked my dad about Uncle Greg's conversion. He recounted how several of his older siblings, including Greg, were saved as children after an evening time of family worship. Our Man of the Word focus for the fall came immediately to mind. I could see beautiful green fields for miles, but it was a mental picture of the multi-generational blessing of family worship that captured my imagination.

One of the distinctive features of Bible Christianity is that it is rooted in history. Unlike in false religions, such as Buddhism or Islam, time and historical events in God's Word are meaningful. In fact, if the narrative accounts that Scripture records are not actually historical, we are the most hopeless lot on earth. The Bible's history is our history. Our eternal lives depend on it. And it is our privilege and responsibility as men to make sure that the story of God's revelation keeps being told.

Asaph, the human author of Psalm 78, helps us understand this. He is concerned that those who use this song to worship God remember Israel's history. He appeals for an attentive ear to his "instruction" (v. 1). But his "parable" (v. 2) is not a new thought. The wisdom God's Spirit burdened him to speak is what Israel had "heard and known," what their "fathers [had] told [them]" (v. 3). So, on behalf of his people, Asaph vows to continue bringing God's truth out into the open—to "tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done" (v. 4).

Asaph's pledge to recount the mighty works of God did not arise from human initiative. God requires His people to teach future generations of

His marvelous works. The imperative for fathers to instruct their children is “a testimony” the Lord “established,” and “a law” the Lord “appointed” (v. 5). In other words, God revealed the Mosaic Law in its entirety, but it is a particular divine imperative that Asaph has in view—the command that fathers teach their children (see Exod. 10:2; Deut. 4:9; 6:20-25). There is no suitable alternative.

From there, Asaph gives additional reasons for fathers to heed God’s command. First, this instruction perpetuates the faith. We are to teach our children God’s works and ways “*that* they may arise and tell *them* to their children.” The Lord has multiple generations in view. What a sobering yet amazing thought! What we do in our homes now has an impact on “children *yet* to be born” (v. 6). Second, this instruction positions our children to possess the faith personally. They will evidence this living faith by “put[ting] their confidence in God and not forget[ting] the works of God, but keep[ing] His commandments” (v. 7). Church history bears frequent testimony to the tragedy of one generation simply riding the coattails of their believing predecessors. We want those in our home to know God personally. Third, this instruction points our children away from the “stubborn” and “rebellious” path of their forefathers. God means for Scripture’s testimony to steer our families clear of repeating the mistakes of those “whose spirit was not faithful to God” (v. 8). In fact, the rest of this psalm speaks of the sinfulness of God’s chosen people in spite of God’s kindness. Our own past is stained with failure too. We know the sinfulness of our hearts. But praise God, we have an opportunity in the present to make a difference for the future! The fact that the Lord has commanded us to reverently rehearse His truth is enough. The eternal blessings that accrue from our obedience should motivate us even more.

Brothers, the duty and delight of transmitting God’s truth is ours. We cannot simply wish that the coming generation will avoid the mistakes we or others have made. We cannot assume that the teaching they receive in our local church diminishes our responsibility. We cannot merely wait for circumstantial opportunities to impart biblical teaching. We cannot be content to stay busy like Martha when our children desperately need the heart of Mary. We cannot expect the enticing appeal of 21st-century worldly pursuits to succumb to disengaged or indulgent or moralistic family life. We cannot fumble the exchange of the Gospel baton by failing to disciple in our homes. Our turn has come. We must engage in the time-honored tradition of transmitting God’s truth through family worship.

THE THEOLOGY OF FAMILY WORSHIP WEEK 2

September 6 – September 12

SCRIPTURE READING

Deuteronomy 12

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” **John 4:24**

BOOK READING

Family Worship (Beeke): Chapter 2 (8 pgs.)

A Neglected Grace (Helopoulos): Chapter 1 (10 pgs.)

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“A family without prayer is like a house without a roof, open and exposed to all the storms of heaven” (Thomas Brooks, cited in Beeke, 12).

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sep 6	1 Sam 31	1 Cor 11	Eze 9	Ps 48
Sep 7	2 Sam 1	1 Cor 12	Eze 10	Ps 49
Sep 8	2 Sam 2	1 Cor 13	Eze 11	Ps 50
Sep 9	2 Sam 3	1 Cor 14	Eze 12	Ps 51
Sep 10	2 Sam 4, 5	1 Cor 15	Eze 13	Ps 52-54
Sep 11	2 Sam 6	1 Cor 16	Eze 14	Ps 55
Sep 12	2 Sam 7	2 Cor 1	Eze 15	Ps 56, 57

GOD'S PRESENCE IN FAMILY WORSHIP

DAVID MINNICK

When God brought Israel into the Promised Land, a land He specifically designates in its entirety as His own (Lev. 25:23), He commanded His people that they were to “seek *the LORD* at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling” (Deut. 12:5). God would elect one geographical point at which to establish His presence and where He could be sought of His people. All males were to appear there before the Lord three times every year (Deut. 16:16), and God required the entire family including the children to assemble before Him once every seven years for the public reading of the covenant (Deut. 31:10-12). God gives the rationale for these frequent journeys to Jerusalem throughout the Law: it was in Jerusalem that God had established His presence, and there He was to be found by every Israelite who sought Him.

This revelation is the background to the question the Samaritan woman posed to Jesus by the well of Sychar; she questioned him about the place of worship (Jn. 4:20). The Old Testament Scriptures had convinced the Jews that Jerusalem was the place where God could be found while the Samaritan Pentateuch, an aberration of the Jewish Old Testament, specified Mt. Gerizim. The woman had rightly concluded that *worship could not take place except within the presence of God*. She was questioning the location of that presence. Her assumption, informed by Old Testament revelation, was that God's presence was confined to one particular geographical place; it was only at this location that true worship of God occurred.

Jesus responds by informing her that the place of worship had changed. Worship was no longer in Jerusalem or Mt. Gerizim; that debate was futile. Worship now occurred within the human spirit (Jn. 4:24). Further Scriptures reveal that the corporate (1 Cor. 3:16) and individual (1 Cor. 6:19) indwelling of the Holy Spirit brings near the presence of God to every believer. The indwelling Holy Spirit makes possible the corporate and individual worship of God within the human spirit. It is His presence through His Spirit *within our homes* that legitimizes *family* worship. Within our homes, we can together approach Him in worship because His presence is there.

In *A Christian Directory*, Richard Baxter builds upon these truths by fleshing out their implications for family worship.

“If . . . families do live in the presence of God, they should, by faith, apprehend that presence. It is God’s will that families as such should solemnly worship him. . . . When a king, a father, a master are absent, actual honor to be presented to them is not due because they are not capable of receiving it. . . . Yet when they stand near, it is a contemptuous subject, a disobedient child, who will not offer actual honor to them. Now God is ever present not only with each person as such but also with every family. As he is said to walk among the golden candlesticks in his churches, so does he in the families of all by his common presence and of his servants by his gracious presence.”¹

Baxter employs this line of reasoning as his third of five arguments to prove “that the solemn worship of God in and by families as such is of divine appointment” (61). The nearness of God in the Person of His Spirit compels us to regular family worship. These doctrines give light to our understanding concerning the legitimacy and vitality of our family worship and radiate warmth to kindle greater devotion.

This lens of God’s presence through which we have viewed our family worship is perhaps something of which we do not make frequent and intentional use. The greatest impediment to our use of these doctrines in kindling a more earnest and reverent family worship is a lack of faith. Baxter warns against the blindness of unbelief that fails to adequately apply God’s immediate presence to our family worship. “If any say, ‘We do not see God, otherwise we would worship him daily in our families,’ I answer, faith sees him who is invisible. If one of you had a son who was blind and could not see his own father, would you think him excusable if he did not honor his father when he knew him to be present? We know God to be present, though flesh is blind and cannot see him at all” (66). Baxter puts his finger upon the root of the failure to embrace family worship more fully—the eye of faith is often languid. As in every aspect of

¹ All page references to Baxter’s *Christian Directory* refer to the *Directory*’s section on the Christian home as edited by Randall J. Pederson and published by Crossway under the title *The Godly Home* (Wheaton, IL: 2010). The text in the main is Baxter’s though Pedersen has modernized and updated the language to make it more accessible.

the Christian life, one of our most fundamental needs is greater faith. We as husbands and fathers need greater faith to more fully enter into the role of leading family worship while our families need greater faith to embrace it more earnestly.

In answer to our great need for faith, the Scriptures proclaim themselves to be the source whereby faith is strengthened (Rom. 10:17). Calling attention to the biblical doctrine of God's presence within our homes and our subsequent responsibility to offer up to Him our worship there can be a means whereby we lead our families into a more earnest and devoted family worship. Our homes are furnished with the presence of God by virtue of His Spirit's inhabitation of our hearts. To neglect regular family worship is to fail to reckon on His constant presence within our homes. He is here within our homes, and His constant presence calls forth our persistent allegiance and worship.

September 13 – September 19

SCRIPTURE READING

Deuteronomy 6

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“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 your 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.” **Deuteronomy 6:4-7**

BOOK READING

A Neglected Grace (Helopoulos): Chapter 2 (12 pgs.)

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church”
(Jonathan Edwards, cited in Helopoulos, 30).

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sep 13	2 Sam 8, 9	2 Cor 2	Eze 16	Ps 58, 59
Sep 14	2 Sam 10	2 Cor 3	Eze 17	Ps 60, 61
Sep 15	2 Sam 11	2 Cor 4	Eze 18	Ps 62, 63
Sep 16	2 Sam 12	2 Cor 5	Eze 19	Ps 64, 65
Sep 17	2 Sam 13	2 Cor 6	Eze 20	Ps 66, 67
Sep 18	2 Sam 14	2 Cor 7	Eze 21	Ps 68
Sep 19	2 Sam 15	2 Cor 8	Eze 22	Ps 69

LOVE-GENERATED DEVOTIONS: THE SPIRIT OF WHAT GOD WANTS FOR FAMILIES

PETER DAVIS

I confess that at times I'm tempted to be frustrated with the way God set up His Word: I find myself wishing that He would just spell out exactly what I'm supposed to do. Why doesn't God tell us exactly what to do in "family devotions"? Whatever you call it (family devotions, family worship, family altar, prayer time), none of these terms are found in scripture. There is not even a narrative passage to illustrate family devotions.

But this does not mean we should not diligently pursue the practice of family devotions. The Bible never tells us to "have our private devotions" either. But private devotions is a "bare minimum" way to fulfill what God *does* command: constant meditation on His Word (Jos. 1:8, Psa. 1:2, Psa. 119:97). No doubt the practice of "family devotions" is a minimum requirement as well.

So what then does God want us to do in family worship? The law of the Lord is perfect (Psalm 19:7). Whatever God emphasizes is what needs emphasis. However, God says something in the best way it can be said. So when God's Word doesn't "spell out something," there is a reason.

What if God had said, "Read the Bible with your family and pray 15 minutes a day"? It would be easy to go through the motions of that. As I am writing this, I remember times I obeyed my conscience and we "did our 15 family minutes." There was no doubt much good in that. But we could have all profited even more if I had gone deeper into the spirit of God's Word in the way I approached family devotions.

Deuteronomy 6 is a passage that captures the spirit of family devotions.

⁷ 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.

This verse mentions diligent parental teaching. It also mentions four times to talk about God's words: when you sit, when you walk, when you lie down, when you rise up. This doesn't mean to have "family devotions"

four times a day. The spirit of this is, “God’s Word should be spontaneously on your lips as a family often.” This does imply interaction also.

But how does that happen? If this is merely “forced” or “plastic” it could hinder the blessing. We could come across as “hyper-spiritual” people trying to impress men or gain favor with God. The root of what God really wants is two verses prior. Note the sequence from vv. 5-7:

⁵ “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

⁶ “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

⁷ 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.

Love for God leads to constant meditation on His Word. This in turn leads to spontaneous talk of His word and diligent parental instruction. We all speak naturally about what we really love. When our discussion of God’s Word comes not because we feel obligated to “have family devotions,” but because we just love God with our whole heart, soul, and mind, that speaks volumes to our kids. Family worship can unfortunately be like a box that you get out dutifully, like shining your shoes. When your obligation is fulfilled, you put the stuff back in the box and go on with your life. The spirit of that is a long way from the spirit of a Deuteronomy 6 home.

The Hebrew word translated “teach diligently” means “inculcate.” Whatever you do, it should include inculcation. Be age-appropriate in length and tone. Our motive and manner should be selfless love for our family members. Many of us as dads are concerned that we don’t have the eloquence to lead family devotions well. Nonsense. You could be as eloquent as an angel, but if you don’t speak with love, you are as irritating as clanging pots and pans (1 Cor. 13:1). We should speak as well as we can, but be more concerned that what we say is said with a heart of love (and all that goes with love—patience, kindness, etc.).

God doesn’t specify how Timothy’s mother and grandmother had family devotions. What God does say is that the unfeigned faith of parents was passed on to Timothy.

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.*

This is highly instructive. As dads, we do well to first exercise unfeigned faith in the content of our family devotions. This prevents a forced or unnatural spirit, and lends a certain spiritual power.

Many proverbs begin, “My son...” then proceed to give an earnest command. This is a tone of tender but urgent parental appeal. It is not heavy-handed, though at times discipline *is* necessary. Consider Proverbs 23:26: “Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways.” If I simply read a passage, but never make a tender but urgent parental appeal to the heart, I am missing part of God’s will for me as a parent. Verse 26b teaches that my own example should back up my appeal.

So may our family devotions—yea, our family spirit in general—be characterized by whole-hearted love for God, spontaneous fellowship, unfeigned faith, a loving tone, and urgent appeal.

MOTIVATION FOR FAMILY WORSHIP

WEEK 4

September 20 – September 26

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Samuel 3

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ And Samuel said, ‘Speak, for Your servant is listening.’”

1 Samuel 3:10

BOOK READING

Family Worship (Beeke): Chapter 5 (7 pgs.)

A Neglected Grace (Helopoulos): Chapter 3 (9 pgs.)

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“I charge you, fathers, take every pain to train your children in the way they should go. I charge you not merely for the sake of your children’s souls; I charge you for the sake of your own future comfort and peace. Truly your own happiness in great measure depends on it” (J.C. Ryle, cited in Beeke, 43).

M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sep 20	2 Sam 16	2 Cor 9	Eze 23	Ps 70, 71
Sep 21	2 Sam 17	2 Cor 10	Eze 24	Ps 72
Sep 22	2 Sam 18	2 Cor 11	Eze 25	Ps 73
Sep 23	2 Sam 19	2 Cor 12	Eze 26	Ps 74
Sep 24	2 Sam 20	2 Cor 13	Eze 27	Ps 75, 76
Sep 25	2 Sam 21	Gal 1	Eze 28	Ps 77
Sep 26	2 Sam 22	Gal 2	Eze 29	Ps 78:1-37

ETERNAL REWARDS FROM THE SPEECH OF GOD

JERID JONES

In his work, *Bible Characters*, Alexander Whyte begins his portrayal of the prophet Samuel by mentioning a painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds. The painting (c. 1776) was titled, "The Infant Samuel," and pictures the young child Samuel kneeling with folded hands, his open-eyed face toward heaven. Implied in the picture is that Samuel is experiencing the voice of God. Reynolds masterfully captures a mixture of fear and wonder on the face of the child. Whyte tells of a mother using Reynolds' painting of Samuel as a teaching tool and speaking these words to her child, "Sometimes when you are alone, my child, and both while you are yet a child, and after you are a big man, the same God of little children and of big men who spoke to little Samuel will come and speak to you. He will call you by name. . . . And, be sure, my child, to answer at once. Be sure you say that moment, Speak, Lord, for Thy little servant heareth. And God will speak to you just as sure as He spoke to Samuel. Be sure He will."

As fathers, we long for God to speak to our children like He spoke to Samuel. We also want to believe that our own spiritual efforts are being used by God in our children's lives. Like Samuel, we want to see our children regenerated by, instructed by, speaking for, walking with, and serving God. Are such eternally life-changing results to be expected from our lowly family worship? If we strive to lead in daily family worship with expectant faith, we can trust that our God is working out His daily and eternal plan for the lives of our children and wives.

We can gain encouragement from the truth that God continues to use His words to produce eternal rewards in children. Verses like 2 Peter 1:19, "we have **the prophetic word** *made* more sure" and 2 Timothy 3:15-17, ". . . **the sacred writings** which is able to give you the faith that leads to salvation," are examples of the Divine tools possessed by the father in family worship. God uses fathers, leading their families in worship, to bring about His Sovereign work. We often doubt the ability of our God to work in the lives of our children. Perhaps a brief look at the circumstances surrounding Samuel's early life would encourage us that our God is infinitely powerful to

produce spiritual life in the most adverse situations. Eli, Samuel's guardian, had sons who frequently disobeyed, and it appears Eli did very little to discipline them. Samuel would have grown up around this display of sin and without the benefit of close parental instruction. Samuel was growing up without parents, surrounded by poor examples, and Scripture testifies that a "word from the LORD was rare in those days." Also, in this chapter the Holy Spirit makes a striking statement regarding Samuel's spiritual condition, "Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him." But, in spite of the glaring lack of Godly men speaking for Him, God was at work fulfilling His sovereign will. In 1 Samuel 3:4 we read the words, "the LORD called Samuel," and in verses 4, 8 and 10 the Lord speaks to Samuel. In this account God uses His own speech to reveal Himself to a human soul, draw that soul to Himself, instruct that soul in His ways, and then call that soul to a life of service and worship. And God did all that work in spite of powerful and evil opposition. We also struggle against strong adversaries but can take great comfort and strength that God is using His word and our walk with Him to produce spiritual progress in our homes.

Because the Unchangeable One continues to influence and instruct human souls through His powerful and living Word, we must believe and obey the command and calling of Deuteronomy 6:6-7 with new zeal: "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." When we obey and gather our family together to worship God, our little meetings are sanctified by God's Spirit. Even when the atmosphere of family worship seems "unsanctified" with normal family distractions, God powerfully uses the means of family worship to demonstrate His attributes and grace to the individual members of our families. It is my desire to call our attention to God's story, in Samuel's life, to remind and encourage each one of us that family worship is God's work through us. Through family worship, God is calling the individuals in our homes to a walk with Him. **There is eternal benefit to family worship.** We may never see "spiritual life" displayed in our children while we are on this earth, but we have every reason to expectantly believe that God is using our family worship to impress His instruction on the hearts of our children.

Dr. Alexander Whyte ends his thoughts on the great rewards of the life of

Samuel with these encouraging remarks to godly parents, "Such, then, was some of *the interest that the Lord paid to Hannah* for the early loan of Samuel her son. And the Lord is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Fathers, use daily family worship to prepare the soul of your child to hear God's call and, then *our paid interest* would be in their reply, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."

September 27 – October 3

SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah 55

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth
And making it bear and sprout,
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It will not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”

Isaiah 55:10-11

BOOK READING

Family Worship (Beeke): Chapter 3 (16 pgs.)

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“[Children] will tolerate weaknesses and even sins in their parents so long as the parents confess their wrongdoings and earnestly seek to follow the Lord” (Beeke, 22).

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sep 27	2 Sam 23	Gal 3	Eze 30	Ps 78:38-72
Sep 28	2 Sam 24	Gal 4	Eze 31	Ps 79
Sep 29	1 Ki 1	Gal 5	Eze 32	Ps 80
Sep 30	1 Ki 2	Gal 6	Eze 33	Ps 81, 82
Oct 1	1 Ki 3	Eph 1	Eze 34	Ps 83, 84
Oct 2	1 Ki 4, 5	Eph 2	Eze 35	Ps 85
Oct 3	1 Ki 6	Eph 3	Eze 36	Ps 86

WHAT FAMILIES DO TOGETHER

KRISTOPHER ENDEAN

Being a family involves doing things together. A family lives together, talks together, travels together, and enjoys entertainment together. A Christian family goes to church together, serves together, and prays together before meals. So what should be more natural for a Christian family than reading God's Word together as well?

For my family, devotions were always part of dinner. We made it a point to eat dinner together every evening. Laughs and lessons from the dinner table are among the fondest memories of my childhood. As dinner would wind down and Mom would start putting cold things back in the refrigerator, Dad would excuse himself briefly, duck into the other room, and come back with his Bible. Our time together was never complicated. Dad would read a passage of Scripture, we might discuss part of it, one of us would pray, and then we would be dismissed to clean up the kitchen, work on homework, practice our instruments, and do whatever else was on the agenda for the evening.

What Dad read varied. Sometimes we worked through Proverbs, other times Psalms, or a Gospel, or an Old Testament history narrative. When we were young, Dad would read shorter sections, often from a study Bible that included charts or graphics that helped us visualize the content. To keep us focused, he made a habit of asking us, "What was the last word?" Since we did not know when he would stop reading, we had to pay attention! When we eventually learned to catch the last word even if we were tuned out, he would smile and ask, "What was the second-to-last word?" After reading a section, Dad might ask us kids a question based on the passage. Mom might ask Dad what something meant or observe a connection with what she had been reading in her own devotions. Our time together was not complicated, but it was effective.

The value of this devotional time extended beyond the exposure to God's Word and the leadership Dad took as the spiritual head of our family. This habit also provided a natural, daily forum for spiritual conversation. The regular practice of dinner and devotions together showed us that family time was important and that what God says to our family is important.

Dad modeled how to read through a book of the Bible, answer questions about what it meant, and personally consider what it taught. This was also an opportunity to learn how to pray as we took turns leading the family in prayer.

Our time together for dinner and devotions was generally unhurried and would last anywhere from 45 minutes to nearly 2 hours, but it was always time well spent. In order to protect this time, we rarely scheduled things for the evenings if we could help it. If we did have plans (like taking a walk on the beach together at sunset), we did not set a particular time on it. We would go “whenever we are done with dinner,” which, of course, included devotions. Certainly there were occasions when evening obligations precluded our normal custom, and we did not adhere to this same schedule on Wednesday and Sunday evenings—but those were exceptions, not the rule.

Family worship does not have to be elaborate for God to use it in the spiritual growth of your family. Simply establish a pattern of leading your family to consider God’s Word. Set aside some time at least several days each week. Ideally, find a time that is open-ended, but whatever time you choose, protect that time from all the activities that can so easily encroach upon our best intentions for spiritual discipline. Then read and pray together. One passage, a few prayer requests, and one person leading in prayer may be all you do. But that will set a precedent for the centrality of Christ in your family, and it will create a natural forum for spiritual discussion of all kinds, whether related directly to the passage at hand or not.

God promises that His Word will accomplish His purposes (Isa. 55:10–11). Like summer afternoon showers that moisten grass withering in the noon-day sun, God’s Word can refresh your family day by day. Like winter snows that melt under heavy spring rain, softening ground that has been firmly frozen for months and bathing fields in puddles, we have the opportunity to saturate our families with the Word of God. And just as that precipitation fills my home state with lush forests, wildflower meadows, and countless lakes and rivers teeming with fish, so God’s Word brings spiritual life and vitality to those who hear. God, through His Word, can disciple our families in ways we could never discern because His Word can penetrate where we can never explore (Heb. 4:12–13). God promises to prosper His Word. May we believe that promise and actively seek to lead our families before Him! It does not have to be complicated to be effective. Just give them the Word.

THE PRACTICE OF FAMILY WORSHIP

WEEK 6

October 4 – October 10

SCRIPTURE READING

Joshua 24

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Joshua 24:15

BOOK READING

A Neglected Grace (Helopoulos): Chapter 4 (16 pgs.)

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“I agree with Matthew Henry when he says, ‘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’” (Charles Spurgeon, cited in Helopoulos, 52-53).

M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Oct 4	1 Ki 7	Eph 4	Eze 37	Ps 87, 88
Oct 5	1 Ki 8	Eph 5	Eze 38	Ps 89
Oct 6	1 Ki 9	Eph 6	Eze 39	Ps 90
Oct 7	1 Ki 10	Phil 1	Eze 40	Ps 91
Oct 8	1 Ki 11	Phil 2	Eze 41	Ps 92, 93
Oct 9	1 Ki 12	Phil 3	Eze 42	Ps 94
Oct 10	1 Ki 13	Phil 4	Eze 43	Ps 95, 96

BUILDING FAITH AT HOME

RIES BARLOW

When the “great commission” passages are preached, we typically think of fulfilling this commission outside of our families. This is a great mistake, for what are we to do with those living inside our homes? The LORD has blessed us with children that need to be saved and discipled. Now, I know that we are not able to change a heart, but we certainly can create an atmosphere within our homes that is God-honoring and pleasing in His sight.

One of the best ways we can accomplish this is by having a daily, specified time of prayer and Bible study as a family, i.e. “family worship.” What does the Bible say can be the result of being consistent at this? Paul testifies of Timothy, “. . . that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). Paul’s statement is illustrated in the life of Joshua. At the end of the book (24:31), it states, “Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel.” Their leader had long passed off the scene, and yet they were still following in his footsteps. Is that not what we are all desirous of in our children, to “have no greater joy than to hear that [our] children walk in truth”? Not only that, but that when our appointment with death comes, they remain faithful to the LORD? In Joshua’s day, how did this happen? Reading through the book of Joshua, you find that he displayed a sincere faith in what God had said. For example, in Joshua 1:11b he states, “You are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God is giving you to possess it.” Furthermore, in Joshua 3:5b, “Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.” Again, in Joshua 6:16b, “Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.”

As leaders of our homes, we, too, can build faith in our children through sharing answers to prayer in our family devotional time. Reminding them that the LORD—as the Great Physician—healed so-and-so and that the LORD provided for this particular need builds their faith in Him and teaches them about His faithfulness. Furthermore, it displays our complete dependence upon the LORD—that mommy and daddy do not have

all the answers but must rely upon Him alone. Joshua is consistent with this for near the end of his life he states in Joshua 23:14, "Not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed." Joshua's example is also an illustration of the *shema* recorded in Deuteronomy 6. "These words . . . 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" (v. 6a, 7).

Discipleship is a daily investment of our time in sharing God's Word with our children as we go about our day. One of the best ways of accomplishing this is in family worship—where we can build their faith in God through Bible study, singing, and prayer.

THE PRACTICE OF FAMILY WORSHIP

WEEK 7

October 11 – October 17

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 16

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“Rejoice always;
pray without ceasing;
in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BOOK READING

A Neglected Grace (Helopoulos): Chapter 5 (5 pgs.) and Chapter 7 (8 pgs.)

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“Gloominess, or austerity of devotion, will make them think it is a hard service. Let them be met with smiles. Let them be met as friends. Let them be met as for the most delightful service in which they can be engaged” (James W. Alexander, cited in Helopoulos, 87).

M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Oct 11	1 Ki 14	Col 1	Eze 44	Ps 97, 98
Oct 12	1 Ki 15	Col 2	Eze 45	Ps 99-101
Oct 13	1 Ki 16	Col 3	Eze 46	Ps 102
Oct 14	1 Ki 17	Col 4	Eze 47	Ps 103
Oct 15	1 Ki 18	1 Thes 1	Eze 48	Ps 104
Oct 16	1 Ki 19	1 Thes 2	Dan 1	Ps 105
Oct 17	1 Ki 20	1 Thes 3	Dan 2	Ps 106

JOYFUL FAMILY WORSHIP

CARL OSTEEN

Brothers, in my years God has changed me from a person of much insecurity and fear to one of great contentment and peace. He will make tomorrow better than today. Times of worship with Wilma, my wife, are even more blessed than when our children were young. I'm sure that all of my delight—past and present—is wholly by His grace and not “luck” or work. God often reminds me of His continual flow of physical, social, and spiritual blessings. My difficulties have been few and short.

This truth is now clear, but until a few years ago, my troubles bothered me far too much. When they lingered, my spirit grew heavy. My inner man sank low. Whining and complaint filled my heart, though neither I nor others detected the sin. I didn't think I was doing wrong. God just wasn't helping me enough! I knew people who had the abounding joy and peace I sought, and I “knew” their troubles had to be short-lived. Living in “disappointment with God” was hard. I worked, prayed, and got counsel. How could I get Him to help me solve my problems and gain deeper joy? I never considered how Paul, who had *real* problems, managed not to “lose heart” (2 Cor. 4:16). Prayer, reading the Bible and other books, and everything else left me lacking. Yet as years passed, God not only never granted this plea to be trouble-free but actually multiplied my troubles.

With family worship specifically, I often led mostly out of duty, and I knew something was wrong. My hope endured that some day God would let me live without trouble, so I couldn't let disappointment show! As our little family worshiped, we sat up straight, sang, read and discussed the Bible, asked questions, and prayed expecting blessings. The truths were learned, that duty was fulfilled, then I went on to the next duty. God had granted grace, and we had obeyed. All of us were growing less worldly and more like Christ. These times were actually very helpful and greatly blessed to our spiritual well-being. But surely family worship should be more than being faithful to duty! I realize now that God wasn't satisfied with my lack of “heart.” He is *really* pleased only with unconditional, wholehearted worship (Isa. 29:13).

Even we earthly fathers expect our little ones to believe our judgment is

better than theirs, yet I was damping my enthusiasm because He chose not to grant what I thought best. We want our families to follow cheerfully with trusting hearts. A tolerant, dutiful service is better than rebellion. But our children ought to be full of enthusiasm, anticipation, and energetic diligence. My kids should trust me and be thrilled with my gifts (e.g., their Christian education). They should follow me even when times are hard.

For many years I shamefully mistrusted God's judgment which kept me "living in trouble." I must have thought I knew better than He. But the Lord is gracious! My family made my leading easy. My decisions were faulty, but still they trusted with hardly a flinch. Once when some cousins were showing their nice gifts to our children, I overheard a compliment that still floods my eyes with joyful tears. Our precious child, who had very little comparable to her cousin's treasure, simply, sincerely, and cheerfully bragged from her *heart*, "Every day is Christmas at our house!"

"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn. 4:24). I find great help in meditating on this instruction. My family has never idolized me and, of course, should not. But their spirits toward me, as God's ordained authority in their lives, have been right. Yet, my spirit toward God should be better than theirs are toward me. Yet for many years I was critical. I treated His word (the truth in which He requires our worship) as if it were spoken by my peer. If I didn't feel like obeying a command like "forgive him" or "rejoice evermore," I ignored it.

Now, I tell myself this. "You are very little, ignorant, and unbelieving. Never distrust the One who died for you." Carl says, "I just can't." I respond, "O yes, you can joyfully trust and obey. All things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23-24). He commands, "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks" (1 Thess. 5:16-18). So I tell myself, "Carl, believe these Bible truths. Pray for help to believe the truth. When He gives the help, 'believe that you have received it' (Mk. 11:24). It's yours. Obey with joy."

Brothers, what am I urging? Let's give prayerful effort to plan and implement family worship. Let's read and learn from others—especially our wives. But above all, let's realize that our own lives must consist of acceptable worship—in spirit (heart) and truth (Bible). Consider your heart. If you find reserve like mine coming from disapproval of God's dealings, count it sin. You're missing the bull's eye! Mortify that sin; then, with joyful adoration, lead your family worship.

October 18 – October 24

SCRIPTURE READING

Hebrews 11

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

"The Lord bless you, and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine on you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance on you,
And give you peace."

Numbers 6:24-26

BOOK READING

A Neglected Grace (Helopoulos) Appendix A (3 pgs.) and Appendix B (5 pgs.)

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

"As Christian parents, our goal in raising our children is not to prepare them for going out into the world as fully functioning adults. Our goal, as Christian parents, is to prepare our children for eternity" (Helopoulos, 43).

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Oct 18	1 Ki 21	1 Thes 4	Dan 3	Ps 107
Oct 19	1 Ki 22	1 Thes 5	Dan 4	Ps 108, 109
Oct 20	2 Ki 1	2 Thes 1	Dan 5	Ps 110, 111
Oct 21	2 Ki 2	2 Thes 2	Dan 6	Ps 112, 113
Oct 22	2 Ki 3	2 Thes 3	Dan 7	Ps 114, 115
Oct 23	2 Ki 4	1 Tim 1	Dan 8	Ps 116
Oct 24	2 Ki 5	1 Tim 2	Dan 9	Ps 117, 118

A FATHER'S BLESSING

TIMOTHY HUGHES

By faith Jacob...blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff (Hebrews 11:21).

The patriarchs were far from perfect. But they did seem to grasp the importance of leading their families in worship. One of the most visible and dramatic ways they focused their families' attention on God and reminded them of their dependence on Him was by blessing their children (and grandchildren!). Careful study of Genesis reveals that there were prophetic aspects to some patriarchal blessings that won't apply to our families today. But there's no reason to suppose that Scripturally informed blessings aren't still appropriate. In fact, the New Testament commands us to bless those who persecute us (Romans 12:14)! How much more should we bless our own families. In Proverbs 31:28 we learn that a husband with a godly wife should respond to her by blessing her and praising her. In 1 Chronicles 16:43, right after the Ark of the Covenant is brought to Jerusalem, David returns to bless his household. This passage is interesting because it links a worship setting to the blessing of one's family. Many other passages also show a strong link between worship and blessing. For instance, the very memorable blessing of Aaron (the high priest) in Numbers 6:24-26 provides a compelling reminder that leading people in worship and blessing them go hand in hand. Elsewhere the connection is made even more explicit: "Aaron was set apart to sanctify him as most holy, he and his sons forever, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister to Him and to bless in His name forever" (1 Chron. 23:13). Solomon blessed the people at the dedication of the Temple (2 Chron. 6:3). When Hezekiah reinstituted the Passover, the Levitical priests blessed the people (2 Chron. 30:27). And it was in the Temple, after all, that Simeon blessed Jesus, Mary, and Joseph (Lk. 2:28, 34).

A blessing is a prayer—a verbal prayer for God's working and favor in someone's life. There is nothing magical about it. But there certainly is something very powerful about it. When a father blesses his son, he expresses his highest spiritual ambitions for him. When he blesses his

daughter, he reminds her that her father's faith is something real and vibrant—not something he is embarrassed to talk about or only does at church. When he blesses his young children, he is instilling in them a deep sense that there is a God in heaven, that He cares about their lives, and that their family is committed to Him. When he blesses his wife, he provides her with a powerful affirmation of his loyal and loving leadership. A blessing can be both deeply affirming and deeply challenging in every good sense of both words. And a blessing from a godly father can help instill hope and spiritual ambition in the heart of a family member.

But the power of a blessing goes far beyond its immediate impact on the spiritual disposition of the family member you bless. Because a blessing is ultimately a prayer to God, the power of a blessing is the power of prayer. It is something to which God Himself responds.

How do you bless your family members? One good way to begin is: "May the Lord bless you . . ." As a father attuned to the strengths, weaknesses, aspirations, and needs of his family, you should know what to say next! But in case this practice is new to you, here is a sample to get you started. My dad used to bless all of us as we drove in the family vehicle on the way to church on Lord's Day mornings. That's a great time for a blessing, and here's one example of what a Lord's Day morning blessing could look like for a young believing son:

"John, may the Lord bless you today as you go to Sunday School and then Big Church and learn about God and His Word. May He help you to be attentive and obedient to your teachers, and may He bless you by teaching you something special about Himself through His Word."

One more word, and this comes from my experience as a son! If you start this with older children who are not used to it, they might think it is a little awkward at first. But even though they might feel awkward, they are really going to appreciate it if they know it comes from the heart of a father who truly loves them. And they are going to grow to treasure it. As you consider how the Lord would lead you to establish or maintain times of family worship, I hope you'll search the Scriptures for their teaching on Scriptural blessings—and share what you learn with your family! And then I hope you'll consider incorporating what you learn into special times of family worship.

CONCERNS ABOUT FAMILY WORSHIP WEEK 9

October 25 – October 31

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 95

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“For thus says the high and exalted One
Who lives forever, whose name is Holy,
‘I dwell *on* a high and holy place,
And *also* with the contrite and lowly of spirit
In order to revive the spirit of the lowly
And to revive the heart of the contrite.’”

Isaiah 57:15

BOOK READING

Family Worship (Beeke): Chapter 4 (5 pgs.)

A Neglected Grace (Helopoulos): Chapter 8 (10 pgs.)

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“Pray, what is your time given to you for? Is it not principally that you may prepare for eternity? And have you no time for what is the greatest business of your lives?” (Samuel Davies, cited in Beeke, 35-36).

M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Oct 25	2 Ki 6	1 Tim 3	Dan 10	Ps 119:1-24
Oct 26	2 Ki 7	1 Tim 4	Dan 11	Ps 119:25-48
Oct 27	2 Ki 8	1 Tim 5	Dan 12	Ps 119:49-72
Oct 28	2 Ki 9	1 Tim 6	Hos 1	Ps 119:73-96
Oct 29	2 Ki 10	2 Tim 1	Hos 2	Ps 119:97-120
Oct 30	2 Ki 11, 12	2 Tim 2	Hos 3, 4	Ps 119:121-144
Oct 31	2 Ki 13	2 Tim 3	Hos 5, 6	Ps 119:145-176

A FAMILY HABIT: KNEELING TO PRAY

JIM ROACH

Now that my wife and I are retired, we truly have the “empty nest”: all three of our children are married, have families of their own, and live a good distance away from us. But rather than be downcast that our whole family is not together as it once was, we rejoice now that the Lord has provided my wife and me with *a new opportunity to worship together*.

This new family worship looks something like this: I might be reading a book at our dining room table when my wife, in the kitchen, remembers she needs to pray urgently for a certain person. So we immediately set aside what we have been doing and then kneel together in prayer. This is to prepare our hearts to come before the Lord without distraction.

Please understand that Scripture does *not* tell us we must be on our knees to pray. The act of kneeling does not award spiritual “points” to us or make us more holy. But kneeling is to remind us that we are His unworthy servants, in the presence of a holy God, begging for His mercy. This is the right attitude toward God if we want Him to live with us and hear us. As Isaiah 57:15 says,

For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, “I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”

It is clear that God revives those who are humble and repentant toward sin. As an example, we see in Daniel 6 that these two attributes characterize Daniel’s worship and prayer. Here, the enemies of God’s man used his habit of kneeling in prayer to trap him. Having tricked the king into signing an irrevocable document prohibiting prayer to any other “god” than this human king himself, they closed in on Daniel.

Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously (Dan. 6:10).

Even though Daniel knew it was against the new law, he continued to pray fervently to the One, True God. In the end of this episode, God rescued Daniel out of a den of lions but destroyed his accusers. The Lord showed approval for his prayer and worship.

While we consider this story as an example of kneeling and praying, we must pay heed to the warning written in 1 Peter 3:3-7. Here Peter speaks to the wife first:

Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

The final sentence of this passage should give pause to every husband. It warns me that my prayers could be hindered if I disrespect my wife. Attitudes of the heart do matter to God, and respectful relationships between family members are needed before a living relationship with God can be built.

In summary, then, there is good precedence for a husband and wife to kneel together while praying as long as the attitude of the heart is contrite and repentant. This activity will strengthen our marriage bond and honor the Lord.

TESTIMONIES OF FAMILY WORSHIP WEEK 10

November 1 – November 7

SCRIPTURE READING

Daniel 6

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

“Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.”

Daniel 6:10

BOOK READING

A Neglected Grace (Helopoulos): Chapter 6 (7 pgs.) and Chapter 9 (11 pgs.)

QUOTATION FOR CONSIDERATION

“Be persuaded brethren, thus to dedicate your houses to God, and beg him to come and take possession of them. If you never did it, do it tonight with all possible seriousness and sincerity” (Matthew Henry, cited in Helopoulos, 100).

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Nov 1	2 Ki 14	2 Tim 4	Hos 7	Ps 120-122
Nov 2	2 Ki 15	Tit 1	Hos 8	Ps 123-125
Nov 3	2 Ki 16	Tit 2	Hos 9	Ps 126-128
Nov 4	2 Ki 17	Tit 3	Hos 10	Ps 129-131
Nov 5	2 Ki 18	Phm	Hos 11	Ps 132-134
Nov 6	2 Ki 19	Heb 1	Hos 12	Ps 135, 136
Nov 7	2 Ki 20	Heb 2	Hos 13	Ps 137, 138

THE IMPACT OF FAMILY WORSHIP

CHRIS BAKER

My father died when I was four years old. I had an older sister, age 7, and a younger brother, age 2. My mother went to work and things were tough—tougher than I realized as a child. There are a number of things that I can recall as a little kid, but one of the most significant ones is when my mother would take the Bible Story Book and would read a story to us. My favorite was about the walls of Jericho coming down. I would ask her to read it again and again. Times like that were few and far between, but I still remember them very vividly. Though it was a rare occurrence and though it wasn't called family worship, it made an impact upon me.

Family altar or family worship was a new idea to me after coming to Christ at age 21. By age 27 we had our first child and at 35 our 5th child. Still, family worship was difficult to have on a consistent basis. I have a great wife that always encouraged me along the way to maintain family worship. I'm glad for her input, but it should not be her place to encourage me to do so. I should have been taking the lead willingly and looking forward to it.

It can be very difficult to measure the impact of family worship on a life. The measurement will probably come in segments as each family member matures. But later in life, when great joy or sorrow comes, our memory will comfort or convict us as to whether or not we provided family worship. When we observe the continuing relationships we have with family members and the relationships our children have with others, we can trace some of the results back to whether or not we had family worship, where the closest of relationships were built and guided. Some may go astray in spite of the devotion and effort we make to help our families worship. This refusal of the light, comfort, love, and encouragement we tried to provide is terrible. *But if we don't even try to provide—that is tragic!*

This is a spiritual work! We need the Lord's divine help to make it come to fruition. Men, we must be Spirit-filled mainly because we are so bent toward carnality. Every excuse and opposition will come at us as to why we can't have family worship today. We know the excuses all too well. Here are some: I'm too tired. It is too late. It is too early. They aren't getting

anything out of it. I can't sing. I'm not adequate for this. An evangelist of the past put it this way, "The door to the room of success swings on the hinges of opposition." Yes, inadequacy in ourselves is an excuse we make. But in reality it is only a factor in the equation. This inadequacy should be all the more reason we ask the Lord to guide and help us. The crux of the matter is really our selfishness. We must think of others and what the Lord really wants instead of ourselves. Our earliest prayer of the day could be asking Him for His help and guidance. This takes humility.

Daniel the prophet was extremely gifted and blessed but also humble enough to realize his need. So he prayed and purposed in his heart to please the Lord by obeying his commandments. Let's make up our minds to do the right thing and have family worship, and, like Daniel, the Lord will show us mercy and grant us help.

In years to come our children should be able to say, "I remember so well when I was a kid how we had family worship. . . ." Our efforts will not be in vain. Doing the right thing always pays dividends. There will be opposition, but by the grace of God you and I can do it. My widowed mom did not have solid Bible training or an expositional church ministry. If her occasional Bible story reading had an impact on my life, what might God do with years of family worship led by the men of our church?



For [the Lord] established a testimony
in Jacob And appointed a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers That
they should **teach them to their children**,
That the generation to come might know,
even the children yet to be born, That
they may arise and **tell them to their
children**, That they should put their
confidence in God And not forget the
works of God, But keep His
commandments...

PSALM 78:5-7