

The Lost Practice (or Spiritual Discipline) of Family Worship

Text: Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

Psalm 101:2, "I will behave wisely in a perfect way. Oh, when will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart."

Introduction:

When was the last time you had bonding with your family? Recently? Just last week? How about the last time you had a family meeting or had a good heart-to-heart talk? Last month? Or Last year? Lastly, when was the last time you all sat together as a family, prayed together, read a verse, the father led a short devotion, the mother prayed for each one in the family, and the children shared stories about how God has been faithful to them? Pastor, is there such a thing? Maybe in an ideal world.

However, in Titus 2:6-8, we learned last month that discipleship is communal. That older people—the parents—should *"⁶ Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. ⁷ In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness ⁸ and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us."*

Today's sermon will be short but practical. I will emphasize the importance of the said spiritual discipline on our title, the practice of family worship. Listen, parents especially fathers because all of you have this imperative command from God. This spiritual discipline, a biblical model for our faith has been a lost practice amongst many Christians.

Illustration: In our family, I grew up practicing this spiritual discipline. We have a saying, "No Bible, No Breakfast." So, whatever our schedule is, we need to meet together before breakfast, read the verse of the day, a super short explanation of the said verse, prayer, then breakfast. Sometimes, after that morning devotion, I would return to my bed and sleep again. In my younger years, we would always meet before sleeping, because we only leave in one room (literally one room; just one step, you're in the kitchen; another one step, the bed; another step, the living room). At night, we will talk about what positive things happened to us in our whole day. Then, later our prayer requests. We pray together simultaneously. In our youth fellowship, we are practicing the "highlight of our week," where we share a specific moment that happened in our week.

Main Idea:

Old Testament Model: Joshua 24:15, But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Remember, Abraham brought Isaac to worship. Isaac and even Sarah were not surprised because it had been a common thing for families especially the fathers to lead family worship. It is even

in the book of Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.” Such person bears wisdom if they equip their child in doing worship.

The challenge is that we let our children to be disciplined by the pop-culture. Or maybe even yourself. How many hours do you watch Netflix? Spend time in your work? Play a game? Or read Facebook posts or use other social media? You hear these kinds of stories, that kind of posts; just recently we learned that there are more variants of “Marites” than the variants of COVID-19.

Well going back, while in NT Model we learned that Timothy learned how to do worship and the practices of the faith not through other people but through Eunice (his mother), Lois (his Grandma. In 2 Tim:1-5, states, *“² To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³ I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. ⁴ Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.”*

In Acts 10, when Cornelius heard about the coming of Apostle Peter, he called his entire household and even his relatives which led to regular time for them to do family worship. If you are going to survey the book of Acts, there are many times where the household of Christians—or the early church, the early converts—worshipped God continually.

What happened then? How come many churches and Christian families no longer practice such spiritual discipline? Short church history lesson, during the Medieval years, the shift from Family Worship to Church Catechism happened. From the Reformation years, even Baptists had Catechism classes where we train children about the doctrines of our faith. So, when they will engage with the outside world, they are equipped with this knowledge. The Puritans also adhered to the return of the Family Worship.

However, in the late 18th century, Sunday School was introduced. Instead of teaching doctrinal faith or doing family worship. Sunday school classes focused on Bible stories and moralistic lessons that can be learned in those stories. A shift from worship and doctrine to some GMRC lessons. Then in the last quarter of the 20th-century meaning, in the 80s-90s, Sunday school shifted to small groups where Youth also have their own group and was being led by a Youth Pastor.

We should take note that even it shifted from one point to another, that does not mean that it is bad or wrong. What should make us ponder is that the spiritual discipline of family worship was lost during those cultural transitions. Therefore, as a church, we need to redeem this biblical practice.

Jonathan Edwards, *“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.”*

Practical Guide for Family Worship:

What constitutes Family worship? Two major things: Prayer and the Word. Both are inseparable. Just as how Christ modeled prayer, teach your children to pray. Actually, the best method is to pray with them. You do not need to pray long, “Sleepy prayers will put your children to sleep.” Be varied. Don’t pray the same thing every day; Don’t reduce your prayers to self-centered, shallow petitions.”

Read a verse. Explain shortly how you can apply it in your lives. Another method is you can explain the Sermon last Sunday, many things were mentioned during the preaching that your children were not able to grasp somehow. “Be plain in meaning. Ask your children if they understand what you are reading. Be plain in applying scriptural texts” (Beeke and Jones).

Though the Puritans back then shared six elements: (1) prayer, (2) praises, (3) reading of the Word, (4) doctrines, (5) spiritual conversations, and (6) rebuking or accountability. We do not need to be dogmatic about it. In a term, this is not regulative but rather normative.

The goal is simple. Family worship. Keep it short, you do not need to replicate the entire worship service during Sundays. You can be creative if you want. Integrate music, YouTube, devotional apps, and more. As long as **Prayer** and the **Word of God** are there, and your family is there, then you are doing it well. Again, this is a biblical model. This is not a new discovery, nor an invented system by some pastors.

Conclusion:

If you cannot prioritize this in your family, then do not be surprised about what can happen in the future. You are putting your family at risk. Nevertheless, we pray that by God’s grace our children will be guided and strengthened spiritually in other communities. But as parents, we must participate in it. Let us not blame the church, the pastor, the leaders, or the system and give all these responsibilities to them. If you are not following God’s biblical model of family worship, then do not expect that the outside world will do it for you.

Church, parents—brothers and sisters—listen, I already put it there in our bulletin program. It is up to you if you will respond positively or just ignore the importance of Family Worship.

Let us pray the prayer of the Psalmist in Psalm 101:2, 7.

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