

Section 4: God's Good Pattern For Parenting (Part Four)

Lesson 12: Nurture Your Children's Souls Unto Christ

Introduction

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him..." (John 6:44).

No parent can cause their children to come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is a work of God's sovereign grace which he has jealously reserved for himself, (Rom. 9:18). No amount of parental effort, technique, or earnestness will yield any alteration on the Biblical truth that *"it is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh is no help at all,"* (John 6:63). Therefore, we must parent *by faith*, (Heb. 11:1). We must approach the discipleship of our children from a posture of total surrender to God's holy will, and in total dependence upon God's sovereign mercy. We must ever remember that the salvation of our children—just as all salvation—*"depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy,"* (Rom. 9:16). But just as God's sovereignty over salvation does not mean that Christians stop evangelizing with urgency, or that pastors stop preaching with unction, so it does not mean that parents stop doing everything in their power to *nurture the souls of their children unto Christ*.

Parents *cannot* set the hearts of their children ablaze with heavenly love for Christ. But what we *can do*, and what we have been *called by God to do*, is to surround the hearts of our children with the driest tinder, and with carefully stacked kindling, as we wait upon the God of all grace to send down fire from heaven just as he did for Elijah in the days of old, (I Kings 18:36-39). This *"tinder"* and *"kindling"* which we are to gather around our children in the hope of their hearts being *"drawn"* to saving faith are what we often call *the ordinary means of grace*. The ordinary means of grace include: *holy Scripture, prayer, and the sacraments*. These things, though plain and ordinary in the eyes of the world, are *the means* which God has promised to bless for the salvation of souls.

Thus, parents who long to see their children come to share their faith in Christ should be exceedingly diligent to make full use of the means of grace which God has given. We should take every opportunity to pour the grace and truth of God's timeless counsel into the hearts of our children in the hope that God will use it to open their eyes and grant them a saving knowledge of himself. Most importantly, we should do these things not just on Sundays at church, but everyday in the home. For some, this will sound like a lofty and unrealistic ideal. Generally speaking, the Church of our day has fallen so far from practicing normal rhythms of godliness in the home that the mere suggestion of doing so sounds like a radical notion that is out of touch with modern life. But in reality, what I am describing is nothing more than basic Christianity. In fact, this is exactly what *every* Christian parent has been exhorted to in Ephesians 6:4b, which is the text from which we will draw our fourth and final lesson on parenting.

"Fathers...bring [your children] up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord," (Eph. 6:4b).

4. Raise Your Children In the Discipline & Instruction of the Lord

We have already spent a considerable amount of time throughout this study discussing the importance of this task. We have considered our calling to (1) *raise our children in the church*, (2) *to require obedience of our children*, and (3) *to be careful not to provoke our children to anger as we train them up in Christ*. All of those things remain absolutely critical to our calling as parents, and they do overlap in some respects with the exhortation given here. But my desire in this chapter is not to relitigate those points. Instead, my goal is to use this chapter to zero in on the single most important and most effective way that parents can fulfill the calling of Ephesians 6:4b *in their homes*. And that is by practicing family worship.

What Is Family Worship?

First of all, let's admit that the term "*family worship*" does not appear anywhere in the Bible. But then again, neither does the word "*Trinity*". Does this mean the Trinity is unbiblical? Of course not. Sometimes we create suitable titles to help us talk about critical biblical subjects, and the title "*family worship*" is one them. While these exact words cannot be found on the pages of Scripture, the theological truths standing behind them are so deeply interwoven into the unfolding of redemptive history that it would be impossible to untangle the thread. But first, let's define what we mean by the term:

Family worship is a distinct time each day, led by the spiritual leader of the home, wherein the family worships God together through praying, singing, and discussing God's Word.

We will talk more in depth about the nuts and bolts of family worship a little bit later on, including answering many practical questions. But for now, the most important thing is simply to begin digesting the general concept. In order to do that, let's break the definition above into three parts:

1. **First of all, family worship is "*a distinct time each day*".** That is to say, it is the goal of the Christian household (*not a legalistic rule*) to have a time each day that has been intentionally scheduled and set apart, wherein other activities are halted so that the family can gather before God without distraction. This is a sacred time in which the Lordship of Christ over the household is *visibly celebrated* and *practically demonstrated*. Having a distinct and consistent time communicates to our children that the family's pursuit of God and enjoyment of God is the most important priority of the home. The television is off. Phones are put away. Chores, hobbies, sports practices, texts from friends, work demands, or any other types of distractions, are all told that they must wait their turn and bend the knee to Christ. Why? Because the hope of this family, and the priority of this family, is not the enjoyment of the world, but rather the glory of God.
2. **Second, family worship is to be "*led by the spiritual leader in the home*".** In the best cases, family worship is led by the father as the head of the household. It is the father's God-given privilege and duty to be the chief worship leader and discipler in the home. God has set it upon his shoulders to both gather and guide his children (and bride) through this sacred time each day. Moreover, it is the father's responsibility to defend this time of worship from the constant intrusions that will always be threatening to disrupt it. As the demands and challenges of daily life unfold, the children will look to their father's leadership to teach them how to keep Christ at the center, and how to face those challenges according to God's Word. At all times, the mother is supporting and encouraging the leadership of the father. But when, for whatever reason, it is not practicable for the father to lead, the mother should stand in the gap and provide this sacred service for her children.
3. **Third, family worship is a time "*wherein the family worships God together through praying, singing, and discussing God's Word*."** As I mentioned, we will delve more deeply into these three components a bit later on, but for now notice a few things. These three components are exceedingly simple, aren't they? Family worship includes (1) *praying to God*, (2) *singing to God*, and (3) *receiving instruction from God's holy Word*. While family worship can become more complex as the family grows and is more able, family worship can also be as simple as saying a prayer, singing a song of praise to God, and reading a passage of Scripture followed by a brief reflection on the meaning and application of the text to our lives.

This is an abbreviated glimpse at what family worship means and looks like in the life of the Christian family. But now let us ask an even more important question: *Is this practice actually biblical?* Is this something that God has called families to take up as a daily practice in the home, and to devote themselves to with vigilance? Or is this merely a cumbersome add-on that some overly pious men have sought to impose upon their brothers (Matt. 23:4)?

Is the Call To Practice Family Worship a Biblical Mandate or An Invention of Men?

The simple answer to our question is that the call to practice family worship—in *one form or another*—is resolutely Biblical. Family worship is not the invention of overly pious men which the believer may comfortably ignore. Rather, it is the express will of God for the spiritual good of his beloved people. Therefore, those who ignore this practice do so, not only to their own detriment, but even more, to the detriment of their children, (Jud. 2:10-11). From the earliest days of redemptive history, God has called his believing people to raise their children in such a way that the God of their fathers becomes their own God as well, (Gen. 17:7). As the psalmist declares, it is God's will that "*one generation shall commend [the] works of God to another,*" forming an uninterrupted succession of faith that is meant to be passed down from parents to children until the kingdom of God covers the earth as the waters cover the sea, (Ps. 145:3). But where exactly is this passing on of the faith meant to primarily take place? The chief locations are the sanctuary of the gathered saints *every Lord's Day*, and the living room of the ordinary Christian home *every other day*.

God calls believers to "*bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*" by giving us both *biblical examples* of this which are meant to inspire us, and *divine commands* which are meant to commission us. Take first the biblical example given to us of Timothy. It is said of Timothy that even though he was raised in a home where only his mother was a believer, even still, "*from childhood*" he was "*acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make [a person] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus,*" (II Tim. 3:15). How did this happen? When Paul traces the succession of faith that led to Timothy's salvation, he does not trace the origins of this blessing back to a pastor, missionary, or evangelist—as indispensably important as these roles are. Instead, Paul points to the faith of Timothy's grandmother, which was passed on to Timothy's mother, which was then passed on to Timothy himself, (II Tim. 1:5). This indicates that the influence to which Paul ascribes the greatest impact upon Timothy's soul was not a ministry that occurred *outside of the home*, but rather *inside the home*. It was the faithful daily discipleship of Timothy's mother—even as a (spiritually) *single parent!*—that God mercifully blessed to bring him safely unto Christ. This is just one of the Biblical examples we are given for our encouragement in the same work. But let us now turn our attention to the divine commands.

Even if all we had was the single exhortation given to us in Ephesians 6:4b, to "*bring up our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord,*" this would be more enough to warrant the case. For that verse is given to us in the imperative—that is, as a command of God for every believing parent. Moreover, it is beyond dispute that the fulfillment of that command requires us to disciple our children in the home each day. It does not permit us to outsource our parental responsibilities to private Christian schools, youth leaders, homeschool curriculums, to co-ops, etc.—as helpful as these may be. Rather, God calls on parents themselves to shoulder the responsibility of daily pointing their children to the wisdom of his Word so that they may grow up to flourish in Christ. Think also of the passage from Proverbs 22:6 which we considered extensively in previous chapters: "*Train up a child in the way he should go...*" Once again, that verse is not set forth as a suggestion, but rather, as a divine requirement. According to Scripture, spiritual "*training*" is the God-given duty of every parent, (see Ps. 78:4-7). Yet, far and above all the passages we could mention—and there are many!—there is one passage in particular which stands head and shoulders above the rest. In fact, there is no text in all of Scripture which more clearly describes the comprehensive in-home spiritual training which every believing parent is called to provide than Deuteronomy 6:4-9:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord 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. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, 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. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

The first, and most important thing to notice about these verses is the ultimate end which these exhortations for parents are meant to serve. The goal is that both we and our beloved children would "*love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might.*" This is the supreme heavenly objective of which we must never lose sight as parents. Yet, how are we to reach that glorious end? We see in these verses that parents are to promote love for God in our children's hearts not merely

by teaching them—which would be enough in itself—but rather by “*teaching them them diligently*.” The Hebrew word for diligently implies that there is meant to be a holy and jealous zeal which stands behind the spiritual training we provide to our children.

But now we must ask: What exactly are we to teach them? And where exactly are we to administer these lessons? The answers are both provided right in our passage. We are to teach our children the precious truths of God’s Word. And we are to do so “*when we sit in our house, and when we walk by the way, and when we lie down, and when we rise.*” That is to say, in the culture of the Christian home, God’s Word is to be the defining center of our lives. God’s Word is to be so incorporated and interwoven into the life of the believing family that it is as if we have “*bound it as a sign on our hands*” so that no action we take will be uninformed by the wisdom of the Word. God’s Word is to be so pervasively present in the home that it is as if we are wearing the Word of God “*as frontlets between our eyes*”—meaning that God’s Word controls the way we view and interpret all of life. Even the “*doorposts*” and “*gates*” of our homes are to be decorated from top to bottom with the glorious truths of who our God has revealed himself to be in his Word. This is so that every time we enter a new room and every time we depart the home and go out in to the world, we do so being reminded that it is the Lord our God whom we serve, and that is him that we aim to please with our lives.

Now, surely some elements of these exhortations are meant to be understood as *poetic expressions* rather than exact demands. But the poetic expression is crystal clear, isn’t it? The calling of believing parents is to order their homes in such a way as to saturate the souls of the their children with the glory and truth of who God is, so that by their daily nurture, they foster faith in God, love for God, submission to God, and joyful devotion to all God’s holy will in the lives of their offspring. Beloved, this is exactly what family worship is all about. And this is exactly what the Apostle Paul means in Ephesians 6:4b when he calls Christian parents to “*bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*” The controlling center of our homes is not meant to be entertainment or hobbies, work life or education. The center of every Christian home is to be the Lord Jesus Christ. And family worship is one way of describing how we can actually strive to have this biblical mandate become a reality in the rhythms of our daily life as a family.

So What Does It Actually Look Like To Lead Your Family in Worship?

Because of how important I know family worship is to the spiritual formation of the family, I am unashamed to tell you that I have two audacious goals for this chapter. My first goal is to convince you that God is calling you to practice family worship each day. I want family worship to become part of the normal rhythm of your family’s life together in Christ. And dare I say it, if it is not too bold, I hope that by this point in the chapter this first goal is already beginning to be reached in your heart. Oh what joy that would bring to me as your brother in Christ! And what good it will do for your family! But becoming convinced that family worship is a priority and practice worth implementing is one thing. Actually knowing how to do it is another. That is why I have two goals. My second goal is that by the time you complete this chapter, you will feel sufficiently prepared in the practical side of family worship so that you can begin this practice *today*. That does not mean you will feel confident out of the gate, or that it will go smoothly, or be free from awkward moments. It takes time to grow in any new practice in life, and family worship is no different. But in the paragraphs which follow it is my intention to lay out a basic pattern for family worship which will enable you to begin this journey as a family right away.

When Should We Hold Family Worship?

The most important answer to this question is that family worship should be held at a consistent time each day. Different families have different schedules and therefore a universal rule is unhelpful here. Anytime of day that works well for your family is a good time to schedule family worship. In my experience, the families who have had the most success have chosen to hold family worship directly following dinner each evening. However, regardless of what time your family chooses, *consistency* is the primary key. Consistency will build a steady, God-centered rhythm into the life of the family, and even teach the youngest of children to begin to live their lives centered around the God who knit them together in their mother’s womb.

In fact, just the other evening I was away from home during dinner with three of our older children as we attended a prayer meeting. My wife stayed back with our two youngest in order to feed them and lay them down for bed. Later that night, when we had returned home, my wife told me that as dinner came to a close our two year old son, Isaiah, called out in a loud and cheerful voice, “*Time for family worship!*” Then he hopped down from the bench at our table—which is almost as tall as he is—ran to the special cabinet in the living room where we keep our Bibles, hymnals, and catechisms, and shouted out once more saying, “*I’ll get my Bible mommy!*” Now, as a two year old boy, the depth of his theology certainly has its limits. But what a delight to my heart it was to hear that even from his earliest years of life, our consistent pattern of family worship after dinner each evening has already left a lasting impression on his young heart. He knows that we are a family who is going to seek the Lord together each day. And now, rather than us calling him to worship, even at two years old he has already begun to be one who is calling us.

Where Should We Hold Family Worship?

Just as with the time of day, there is no hard and fast rule here. Almost any part of your home will work. However, most families find that the *living room* or *dining room* are the two best-suited options. This is because there is sufficient seating for the whole family to gather together in these locations. The most important thing when it comes to *where* family worship takes place is to choose a location that is most likely to lend itself to the family’s joyful pursuit of God. Parents can set everyone up for success by limiting distractions of various kinds. Phones should be put away. If the television is on, turn it off. If music is playing, hit pause. While it can be helpful to have small toys for very young children to play with during this time, it can also be tempting for others who are ready to learn to be engaged. Our family usually meets in the living room each evening, and my wife and I have found it best to have our children sit up in their seats and to make good eye contact with the person leading, rather than to slouch around. Not only does this help our children practice for their participation on the Lord’s Day, but it also serves to keep them more alert and involved in our time, rather than tuning out.

How Long Should Family Worship Last?

It is best to keep the overall length of family worship on the shorter side as you start this new practice, and especially if you have younger children in the home. Just as it takes time and incremental progression to build physical muscles, so the same is true of spiritual muscles. An initial goal of around ten minutes might be a great launching off point. As you grow in your comfort as a worship leader and discipler in your home, and as your family cultivates a greater familiarity and engagement in family worship, that time will likely extend. Remember, as the old adage goes, “*The only way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time.*” Consistent small successes will do far more good than inconsistent bursts.

What Should We Actually Do During Family Worship?

This question can, and in all likelihood will, grow in complexity over time. But I am a big fan of simplicity here. Especially as you are starting out, family worship should have three simple components: *Prayer, Singing, and Reading Holy Scripture*. Below we will consider what each one of these things might look like when practically implemented, but please know that it really can be as simple as *taking a moment to pray, singing a hymn, and reading a passage of the Bible*. Even if that is all you do to start, and even if it only takes you five minutes to complete, that is a wonderful place for your family to begin. You do not need to be a seminary graduate or an ordained minister to faithfully point your family to Christ each day. Just as God delights to use the ordinary means of grace to apply the saving work of Christ to the world, so he also delights to use ordinary people like you and me to apply his extraordinary grace to the hearts and minds of our precious covenant children.

A Simple Pattern For Family Worship

Below is potential outline for you to follow as you lead your family in worship. This outline is based on the typical pattern that I use in my home each day. It is not canonical, and it can certainly be adjusted and altered as needed. My hope in providing it is not so much to force anyone else into this exact mold, but rather to provide something of a practical guide for those who are just beginning to venture into this new territory. First, you will see a simple sketch of the five-

part pattern. Then, beneath it, I take each of the five parts one by one and offer some further explanations and insights I have picked up along the way. There is much more that could be said, and perhaps should. But remember, my goal here is to provide a simple starting place so that you can begin cultivating this practice in your own home even today.

A Basic Outline of Family Worship

1. Begin With a Prayer of Adoration
2. Sing a Psalm, Hymn, or Spiritual Song
3. Offer a Prayer of Illumination
4. Read, Discuss, and Apply a Small Portion of God's Word
5. Close With Prayers of Thanksgiving and Supplication For Your Family and For Others

1. Begin With a Prayer of Adoration

The Christian life is full of all kinds of prayers, and therefore so should our family worship be. I find it best to teach my children how to engage in all different kinds of prayers by having several shorter segments of prayer sprinkled throughout our family worship times (as you will see). However, we usually begin with a *prayer of adoration*. That is, a prayer that is not focused on asking God for anything, but rather, on simply adoring God and recounting back to him our delight in his goodness, glory, and grace. Sometimes I will offer the prayer of adoration in order to model this type of prayer for my children. Other times, I will ask one of them to offer a prayer of adoration on behalf of the family. Little by little, they learn to adore God and to express their love to him in their own words.

2. Sing a Psalm, Hymn, or Spiritual Song

Singing to God is not an add-on to the Christian life, it is a fundamental part of our communion with the Lord. You do not need to hit every note correctly, nor do you need to be a musical family. Our singing is an expression of our sincere faith and our love for God, not a performance. We have found it best to utilize a faithful hymnal and psalter for family worship. Often we will select a hymn or psalm that we will sing daily for a whole week (or more). This not only allows us to become more familiar with the song, but it also helps our younger children participate more fully as they have the opportunity to learn the song as well. Before children can read, times of singing can be tricky. But it is worth the effort for parents to find ways to include their little ones in the songs of praise offered to God by the family. Having a few shorter and simpler songs on hand can be a help as well, such as the Doxology, or Jesus Loves You. Sometimes we will sing one of these songs *instead* of a longer hymn or psalm, or as an additional song in order to give our littlest ones a chance to more fully participate with us.

3. Offer a Prayer of Illumination

Before we read holy Scripture, we take time to ask God to bless our reading and understanding of his Word by his Spirit. During this prayer, we acknowledge that a true understanding of God's Word is not mechanical. That is, it is not merely an activity of the mind. We need the Holy Spirit to bless our reading and understanding of God's Word so that it goes far deeper than the mind alone, but rather reaches unto the heart and begins to reshape our lives. This prayer is also a time to express our desire for God to grant us spiritual hunger to know him and love him more fully, (Ps. 25:4-5). Once again, I will sometimes lead this time of prayer in order to model it for my children. But other times I will call on one or more of them to offer this prayer in their own words on behalf of the family.

4. Read, Discuss, and Apply a Small Portion of God's Word

It is my conviction that the best way to read the Bible is verse by verse through a whole book. With this in mind, my encouragement is two-fold. First, while all Scripture is God breathed and profitable to us, not every part of Scripture is as easy for us to understand as others, (II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 3:16). Therefore, choose wisely what book you will lead your family through—especially as you are starting out in this new practice. Selecting a gospel or a narrative book like Genesis, Esther, or Acts might be wise as you build this rhythm into your family's life. Diving headlong into Leviticus, Ezekiel, or Zechariah

would still be a godly thing to do, and the Lord will surely bless it because his Word never returns void, but it may be a challenging place to find your wings and begin to train your little ones, (Isa. 55:10-11).

Second, each day as you gather for family worship, I would encourage families to simply read the next small portion of whatever book of the Bible they have chosen until they eventually complete the whole book. The portion you read will vary in size based on the ages and abilities of your family, as well as the depth of the content. It can be helpful to ask your children to read a verse aloud for everyone, or even to read the whole passage, in order to invite their participation. Moreover, it is okay to take shorter chunks, or even to go back to the same passage for a second time to draw out more of its meaning. *The main goal is for the family to come to a true understanding God's intention for the passage as well as a clear sense of how it applies to the real situations and practices of our daily lives.* Drawing out this understanding and giving insight into application is the role of the spiritual leader in the home. This can be intimidating for many fathers for various reasons. But please understand that *being intimidated is not a sufficient ground for you to abdicate this calling in your life.* A good study Bible is your friend here.

You may find it helpful to prepare for family worship in advance as an addition to your own private time with God each day. This could allow you to come to this portion of family worship with a few brief notes and thoughts to share, and with applications that touch the real situations which your spouse and children are facing. That being said, it is also okay for you to tell your children, *"I am not really sure what this passage means."* You are not alone in that! Even as a pastor, there are many passages of the Bible that continue to present special perplexities. Nevertheless, leading your family through the whole counsel of God, even when passages are harder to understand, is showing your children that you are a family who desires to be humbled unto God and who is striving to live beneath the authority of his Word. Even if the passage itself is less clear, those beautiful desires will still be demonstrated to your children, and that will stick with them throughout their whole lives.

Potholes To Avoid

There are a few significant potholes to avoid when leading your family through the Bible. First of all, do not use family worship as a time to scold or discipline your children. If your children are misbehaving during family worship, they may need to be addressed for that specific behavior. But I would strongly discourage you from using the Bible lesson itself as a time to address disciplinary needs in the home. That is best done during other portions of the day. Otherwise, family worship will come to be seen by your children as a time when they get lectured, rather than a time when they gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and are reminded of the gospel of all grace. Additionally, and in relationship to the first, be careful not to become like a musician who only knows how to play one note. The Bible presents a breadth of instruction that sweeps across many different aspects of life. Do your best to emphasize what the passage emphasizes, and be careful not to drift back to the same old drum-beat from each and every text.

Finally, when it comes to reading and teaching the Bible, let me offer two concluding suggestions. First, I would discourage you from using children's bibles or devotional materials during this time. There is a place for reading such things, and they can have good uses in our lives to be sure. But family worship is a time to drink directly from the source. It is a time to hear from God himself, by his Spirit, through his Word. Even the best intentions of men in devotional materials are still a step away from the pure Word of God. Go to the source! Second, and finally, try to avoid a long monologue during your instruction. Ask your children thoughtful questions that help them engage with the passage and that invite them to think with you about the meaning and application of God's Word. Don't be afraid to laugh together as you teach. Don't be afraid to slow down and cover things which seem incredibly simple. Your children need to know the basics, and to know them well—and so do you! So don't feel like you need to 'wow' them with some great new insight. Most often, our role is simply to remind our children of the basic truths which form the rock-solid and unshakable foundation of true Christian faith.

5. Offer Prayers of Thanksgiving and Supplication For Your Family and For Others

As you conclude your family worship time, I find it best to close in prayers of thanksgiving and supplication. This time of prayer will typically include three things: *Asking God to help us live out what we have seen in his Word during family worship, thanking God for the specific ways he has been faithful to care for your family over the recent days, and asking God for his help in whatever ways that you sense need of his aid.* Families should practice this not only with respect to themselves, but also by taking time to pray for fellow church members, family members, neighbors, friends, governing officials, and missionaries. Moreover, when possible, it may be best to ask each member of the family to offer a prayer here—even if that prayer is only a sentence. It is good for us to encourage a rich prayer life in our children, and family worship is one of the best ways to begin cultivating that desired end.

Conclusion: Pray, Sing, Pray, Read, Pray

So there it is, a basic pattern for family worship that any Christian family can begin to practice today: *Pray, sing, pray, read, pray.* None of these things requires special talents or rare gifts. It simply takes a willing heart that is convinced by the teaching of God's Word that this practice is part of the lifestyle God has called you to maintain as a Christian family. When we become convinced that this is part of God's good and holy will for our lives as parents, and when we are given the basic tools that we need to begin this practice, the only thing left is to take the leap of faith and begin. *Why not start today?*

As a final plea to parents to take up this practice in their families, and to maintain it all their days, let me say this: *Sometimes, according to our human perspective, family worship doesn't seem to be very impactful.* We live in a world of immediate gratification where you click a mouse or press a button and the desired end is automatically supplied. But family worship doesn't work like that. In fact, to the eyes of the flesh, family worship often looks quite inconsequential. But appearances can be deceiving, can't they?

If you were to look at water running over a rock, you would not think that something as pliable as water could ever yield any real or lasting impact upon the rock, would you? But when that water—*weak as it may be*—runs over the face of that rock over the course of years, what happens? The rock becomes smoothed and shaped by the water in a way that leaves it forever altered by the flow. Dear ones, the same is true of the practices of Lord's Day worship in the church and family worship in the home. We may not always see the immediate and glorious impact of these things when we look at the specific occasions. But when the ordinary means of grace flow over the hearts, minds, affections, and ambitions of our children over the course of many years, they will inevitably be forever altered by the flow. Indeed, with God's blessing, our children will be brought from death to life, and conformed more and more into the very image of Christ as they grow in the Christian faith. Therefore, let us make every effort to nurture our children's souls unto Christ while believing God's merciful promise:

"And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you," (Gen. 17:7).

P.S. In hiking, people often say, *"The hard climb is worth the glorious view!"* So it is with developing and maintaining the practice of family worship. It will not be easy, and we should not expect it to be. But don't give up! The rewards are worth the effort!