

Biblical Pillars for a Family Foundation

Pillar Two: *Truth Taught and Caught*

I. Introduction

A Once we commit to a “**Christ-Centered Home**,” our next need is a **Home of Truth**.

B. Truth Principles

1. When we refer to building a home of “truth”, we are referring to
 - First, “Truth” is a person – Jesus. A home marked by this is a home where the greatest truth is Jesus - the *Way, Truth and Life* (John 14:6).
 - Second, “Truth” is the scriptures. A home committed to the second pillar is a home where the truth of the scriptures is taught. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
 - Third, “truth” refers to “relating in truth.” We don’t hide from God or each other... we are connected, open to input and honest. (Eph. 4:25)

2. With respect to Christ as the Truth, we addressed that in our first pillar. We are referring to a home where the gospel is proclaimed by believing parents, who set out to be an example as they grow in worshipping, fearing, knowing, loving, serving and following Jesus ahead of all else.

3. With respect to the scriptures being taught: We speak of that truth as being *taught* and *caught*. *Taught* means that God’s Word is being communicated at home. *Caught* means the truth is understood, believed and acted on. (By the way: Remember that the truth must be taught to and caught in the life of parents before they can give it to their kids because none of us *can take others further than we have come*... we can’t give what we don’t possess.)

4. With respect to how we relate: If, for example, you score a 95 on a test of New Testament doctrinal truth, but will not consider your wife or husband’s comments about your sinful anger, you fail this test of truth. If you can clearly, accurately and biblically articulate the truth of the gospel to someone who is without Christ but fail to admit and turn from areas of your life that the Lord clearly wants to be different, you are failing this essential test of truth.

5. Two key verses teach us additional important things about truth.
 - Romans 8:29 - *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.* The goal of our life and home is to develop Christlike character. Truth in all three aspects mentioned above is required if that is to happen.
 - John 1:14 - *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.* This reminds us that Jesus was characterized by grace and truth. It is in the context of grace and truth that His glory is revealed. We’ll look at grace next week, but this week we see the need for truth.

II. Status of Truth in the Christian Church

A. Question of Hypocrisy

1. *Hypocrites – false face* Appearing to be one thing but being another
Doing something good to be noticed and applauded by men. Holding an external conformity to rules and regulations but internally living a different story. Saying you believe x, but living anti-x.
2. Many say it's their obstacle to belief in Christ (though not genuine)

B. Question of Ignorance

15 years ago, George Barna studied beliefs of church-goers and born again Christians

1. Doctrine

- 44% (30%) believe Jesus committed some sin/s
- 40% (35%) believe Jesus did not have a literal, physical resurrection
- 58% do not know that Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount
- 80% believe that people are basically good
- 52% (40%) believe you can earn heaven by being good
- 60% (51%) believe that Satan is a symbol and not a real being
- 60% (55%) believe that about the Holy Spirit
- 34% believe that some sins can not be forgiven by God
- 65% believe all people pray to the same God
- 33% do not believe in the God revealed by the Bible
- 81% believe the Bible declares that “God helps those who help themselves”
- 87% (81%) do not know what the Great Commission is
- 40% believe that all religions teach essentially the same thing
- 50% believe that the book of Thomas is in the New Testament
- 40% believe the whole Bible was written years after Jesus’ death
- 72% (67%) believe there is no absolute moral truth

2. PRACTICE

- a. James 1:25-27 – how are we doing on what God calls true religion?
- b. Bitterness, divorce and division rampant in families and in churches
- c. Fruit of the Spirit is familiar by its absence more than by its display
- d. Evangelist’s story – 10% have shared their faith in past 12 months
- e. Frequent reason given for not believing is the life of Christians
- f. *Huge* numbers of believing youngsters “fall away” ages 18-30
- g. Study a few years ago in our church – only 10% spend any time in the scriptures together as couples or as a family once/week or more. Approximately 15% have devotions as family a couple times/month.

2. Consequence

- a. Witness is weakened
- b. Gospel is questioned
- c. Sin is ignored
- d. God are ignored
- c. All hell breaks loose

III. Truth Taught

A. Role of Truth

1. John 8:32 – to make you free
2. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – reprove, correct, train in righteousness
3. Hebrews 4:11-13 – cut to the quick
4. Psalm 119:105 – light our path
5. John 10:27-28 – lead us to Christ

B. Source of Truth

1. Genesis 3:1-5 – Satan’s whole deception is on God’s Word
2. Numbers 23:19 – whatever God says comes to pass
3. Deuteronomy 4:2 – do not add to nor take away from His Word
4. Deuteronomy 8:3 – we live by every word proceeding from Him
5. Deuteronomy 18:20-22 – test a prophet by whether it comes true
6. Joshua 8:35 – Joshua’s leadership revolves around God’s words
7. 2 Samuel 22:31 – The Word of the Lord is proven
8. 1 Kings 8:56-61 – All He says has come true; therefore, heed Him.
9. Psalm 119 – God’s word and commandments and precepts are true
10. John 14:6 – Jesus is truth
11. John 17:17 – God’s word is truth
12. Revelation 22:18-19 – do not add to nor take away from His Word

C. Who teaches Truth? (See Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Psalm 78:1-8)

1. Who: Fathers – regularly, in humility, in dependence, in faith
Moms – where dads aren’t, can’t yet teach or won’t teach
2. What: “Whole counsel of God” – centering on Christ, but based on the chronology and history of the Old Testament
3. How: “Didactic” – straight instruction (Deuteronomy 6:7a) and “Interactive” (Deuteronomy 6:7b)
4. **SIDE NOTE**: What if you feel like you are untaught and therefore, not very able to teach/lead someone else, including your family?

D. Neglect of Truth

1. Leads to “*Third Chair*” non-Christians
Judges 2:10
2. Leads to under informed and therefore, frustrated, enslaved, impotent Christians who feel ashamed of their walk and reluctant to share their faith or minister in other ways

E. Proverbs

Especially 12:1, 13:1

Homework: Assessing Your Family's Truth Quotient

Children do not carry out or pass on your theories. – Robert Lewis, Real Family Values

Rate yourselves on the following questions so you will understand where your family is on this important area of family life. Three dangers to avoid: 1) Mistaking the Christian life as a series of do's and don'ts because we are evaluating. 2) Being discouraged by the rating so that you are tempted to move in the direction of giving up. 3) Being proud of yourself because of the rating. If it is good, give thanks to God for the teachers and examples you have had and His mercy in your life (Gal. 6:14; 1 Cor. 4:7).

1=No

2= Seldom

3= Yes & No

4=Often

5= Regularly

1. Do the adults of this household show a current openness to being instructed and corrected by God in their own lives? _____
2. Do the adults of this household with predictable regularity set aside times for devotion and instruction for all the members of this household? _____
3. Do the adults of this home regularly (daily or most days of the week?) practice private times with God of prayer and Bible reading for their own spiritual sustenance? _____
4. Do the adults of this household know, understand and agree with what are traditionally considered "orthodox" Christian beliefs? These include God as the Creator, all powerful, everywhere present, all-knowing, eternally existing in three Persons; the Bible as inerrant, reliable and authoritative; man as a condemned sinner in need of a Savior; virgin birth of and death and resurrection of Christ; heaven for all who are in Christ and hell for all others; faith alone in Christ alone being the only way to eternal life; power of the indwelling Holy Spirit; importance of the church; responsibility for personal evangelism and discipleship of others, etc.? _____
5. Do the adults of this home often make themselves open to additional learning through good books and radio, CD's, podcasts, videos, adult classes, etc.? _____
6. Have the adults in this home come to faith in Christ, relying only on Him for forgiveness? Do they have a biblical assurance of their salvation? _____
7. Have the children of this home over age five come to a personal faith in Christ, which they have publicly testified to through believers' baptism? _____
8. Do the adults and children of this home practice living by truth such that they clearly recognized by others as Christ-followers? _____
9. Do children over age 13 in this home carry out regular quiet times with the Lord of prayer and Bible reading to build their own spiritual lives? _____
10. Is integrity valued in this home so that those who live there do not pretend where they are, personally, relationally or spiritually? _____
11. Are the adults in this home approachable regarding weakness or sin? _____
12. Is truth loved in this home, whether it is Jesus, or the truth of the Bible, or the truth of dealing with sin in each other's lives? _____

TOTAL _____

0-25 = Get Help

25-40 = Focus on 1-2 areas this semester

40-60 = Please help others

Your Family Devotions: Well-Aimed Arrows

John Morrison

One family topic that has become very important to me is an area of family life I never experienced until I was 30 years old. It is the area of *family devotions*.

When we married over 30 years ago, one of my big fears was that I would not be able to lead my family spiritually. I knew the Bible taught that, in addition to providing for and protecting his family, a man was to lead them by setting a spiritual direction. I also knew he was to do this humbly and not run over them with anger, sarcasm or a “my way or the highway” approach. The problem was, I had no idea how to lead a family spiritually and my natural tendency was to be angry, sarcastic and run over people.

There is a passage in the Bible that explains to me in a practical way a major part of spiritual leadership. This passage helps me to see what family devotions are, why we do them and how to do them. But before examining the passage, let’s mention a few internal obstacles that may happen for you when you hear the phrase, *family devotions*. Some common responses are:

- 1. I don’t know how**
- 2. Our family has tried and failed**
- 3. Our family is too time-stressed already**
- 4. Kids will fight it**

I have used all of these at different times to keep from doing devotions. But the Lord has shown me that they are illegitimate. He has ways for us to overcome each of these.

Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 78. The author of this Psalm was a worship leader for Israel who wrote more psalms than anyone but David. Here he does a Reader’s Digest summary of the history of the rebellion of Israel in the face of the faithfulness of God. Look at the introduction (verses 1-4), where you will see what family devotions are.

Listen, O my people, to my instruction. Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.

First thing we see is that he tells us to **listen - to incline our ears** to what he is about to say. I normally assume that when you speak, the person you are speaking to is paying attention. But the author here has reason to believe that his listeners need to be challenged to **choose to listen**.

The second thing we see is that what he is getting ready to say to them is going to **be familiar** to them. They have heard it before. I wonder if the familiarity clues us in as to why he tells them to listen. If it is familiar, does it need saying again? And if so, why ask your listeners, *Are you listening? Are you listening?* Might this message be something they have heard but failed to listen to in the past?

The third thing in the passage is that he is getting ready to give them a message that is supposed to be passed on from generation to generation **within one’s own family**. He says, “we have been told this by our fathers” and “we will not conceal it from their children.” “Their children” here is a Middle Eastern way of referring both to one’s own children and one’s children’s children. The message we are about to hear is one we will “tell to the generations to come.”

So the first three things we see are 1) there is a message I **need to choose to listen to**, 2) the message will **be familiar to me**, so I need to guard against thinking I already know it and don't need it, and 3) this message is given to me with the explicit goal of me personally passing it on to **my family generations that follow me**.

OK. **So what is the message?** The last part of verse 4 is the first part that actually contains the message we are to listen for and to pass on. Psalm 78:4 reads, *Tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wondrous works that He has done.* That is it. We might say it this way: **Your family devotions will be all about God. Particularly, three things about God.**

First, the devotions will be an ongoing discussion of what makes Him **worthy of praise** – namely **His attributes and character**. He is holy and just. He is loving and gracious. He is a faithful provider. He is wise and faithful. He is forgiving and approachable. He is over everything... sovereign. He is so amazingly able, so strong. He is responsive to our needs. He is all knowing and present everywhere at one time.

So why is He worth of praise? That could be a great devotional. Ask your children why the Lord deserves praise. Use the Bible to figure it out. I encourage you to watch with your children on YouTube the amazing video by Pastor S.M Lockridge, entitled *Jesus – He's My King. Do You Know Him?* Or you could read a book about the attributes of God as a family.

Second, your devotions will be an ongoing discussion of how **mighty He is**. By doing that, we are reminding one another how dependent we are, how able He is, and how He can **be trusted** now. Listen to a small section in Hebrews 11:32-35 where His might is on display. *And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection.*

Each of these is a powerful strength story about God. But our **devotionals about His strength** should not just be about what He did in the Bible. What has He done in **your life** that required power? What has He done for your friends and the friends of your children? How has He shown you that you can trust His strength? These stories should be stories we can share with our kids and grandkids (*though hopefully without sounding like the guy who trudged five miles to school in the snow year 'round and uphill both directions – in Florida*).

For example, do we see **His strength just in Him saving us?** He turned me from someone who lived for himself and was miserable and foolish to someone who delights in Him and who wants to please Him. Or my dad. His interest in the Lord the first 29 years after I came to know Christ was so non-existent that he told me to quit talking about the gospel with him. But in his last six months at age 83, God drew him to Himself, giving him the desire to read the Bible every night. Shortly before he died, he told me, "John, I so enjoy reading this Bible you gave me long ago. Now I believe what I am reading." That is power. Multiple times in our life that Diane and I were in a particularly tough place financially, God supplied our needs so specifically that it could only have been Him. Friends and family have been in such difficult places and we have seen the Lord deliver and provide. Has He been strong for you?

Third, your devotions will be an ongoing discussion of the **wonderful things He has done** – both in the Bible and in real people's lives - yours and the community of which you are a part. What has He done for you? What stories in the Bible remind you of something great about Him? For example, I love stories of Jesus straightening the man's arm which was withered and the lame he made walk.

If we had nothing more to say than this, it would have been worthwhile. We are told to listen to something so familiar that we might go to sleep instead of realizing that it is **central** to the mission for which God saved you and left you here. That something is that we are to pass on to our kids, our kids' kids, and even to their kids, how **worthy of praise** God is – His character and attributes - how **strong he is** and **what great things He has done**, and therefore **why we should trust** Him. We are to do this through **stories and teachings** which emerge from **the Bible, from our lives** and from the lives of our Christian community. When we do that all together, it is called **Family Devotions**.

So we see what family devotions are. They are times together as a family considering God.

But why do family devotions? Why is it important? And why should it be done in families? Why should it focus on God? Why not just have enjoyable family times together – camping trips, family vacations, Christmas together, playing games, etc.? Why not just let the church teach our kids?

The first question is easy. Read Psalm 78, verse 5. God *“established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to teach them to their children.”* He commanded His believing people to do this with their kids. In Deuteronomy 6, Israel was commanded to discuss with their children informally and formally who God is, His greatness and His commands.

By extension, Christians should do the same thing. Even if we didn't have Ephesians 6:4 to tell dads to *“not exasperate their kids, but to train them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord,”* we could infer the responsibility from the Old Testament. But since we do have that direct New Testament teaching, we can safely say that **one major reason** we should teach our kids about God's praiseworthy character and attributes and His great strength and great deeds is so that we *obey the Lord*.

But God gives us a second reason. Look at Psalm 78:6: *That the generation to come might know, even the children not yet born.* God wants children you have not yet given birth to, to know Him, to praise Him, to know His great strength and to know His great deeds. God shows us that His interest is not merely in us, but in our children, including the ones not yet born. I am almost 60. Hopefully, he means “children not yet born” for me in that Middle Eastern way we saw earlier!

God gives us a third reason for doing family devotions. If the first reason is obedience, and the second is so that our children and their children might come to know the Lord, what is third? In verses 7-8, he tells us that His desire is that our kids and grandkids would do three things:

1. Put **their confidence** in God and **not forget** Him;
2. **Keep His commandments** (which is only possible if their relationship with Him is intact);
3. **Not be rebellious and stubborn and unprepared** as their fathers were – *which is us.*

The reason for doing devotions is more than getting our kids to believe on the Lord. God wants our kids and grandkids to develop such a personal relationship with Him that they trust Him and place their confidence in Him and His Word. People whose confidence is in the Lord do not forget Him.

But God goes one step further. God says that His desire is for our kids to not be like us – at least to whatever extent we've been stubborn, rebellious and unprepared in heart for spiritual battle. He says this because the remainder of this psalm chronicles the unfaithfulness of the nation in the face of the steady faithfulness of God.

I believe that the idea of our being “unprepared and stubborn” probably describes all of us to varying degrees. I'll never forget Billy Graham at age 75 interviewed on TV. The reporter asked if he had any regrets. He said, *“I wish I'd been more faithful, more fully obedient to the Lord, and more of a student of the scriptures.”* She was shocked. Her mouth dropped. *“But, you're Billy Graham, for goodness sakes!”* she cried.

“Yes,” he said with a sad smile. *“But the more you know the Lord, the more you know how worthy He is. You become increasingly aware that you did so much less than He deserves.”*

God wants each generation to benefit from the example and conversation with the previous generation, but to go beyond it – to be more faithful, to be more confident, to be more prepared.

Why are devotions to be done in families, though? We have to infer the answer because the passage does not tell us. But the answer has to do with stories and relationships. Our kids and grandkids come to know us. They know what we are really like. At funerals, kids and grandkids tell stories of what they remember. Stories are the reflection that there was a genuine relationship. Our kids and grandkids know what really matters to us. If the Lord matters enough to us that we talk with them about the great things God has done and His praises, they will always know that Jesus was real to grandma and grandpa. Sometimes that is the main thing that eventually brings a kid around.

God's story is a story of relationships. His relationships with men and women from years ago is passed on today through stories. God is to be such a living reality in the lives of believers that if they help their kids and grandkids look at Him through the Bible and through the stories of their lives, they greatly increase the likelihood that the son or daughter or grandson or granddaughter will come not only to know Christ but to follow Him into battle. Jesus was not meant to be passed on institutionally, but personally.

Who is to do family devotions?

Look at Psalm 78:3, 5. Verse 3 says *"our fathers have told us"* these things. Verse 5 says, *"God commanded our fathers to teach their children."*

It is apparent here (as well as in Ephesians 6) that God assigns the responsibility of teaching our kids to **dads**. It doesn't tell us why here, but it tells us that we are to do it. It tells us that God assigned this responsibility to men. Since the fall of man into sin, we dads often mishandle our responsibility of teaching our sons and daughters. We tend to either fall into "masal" – the harsh rule over a family, or into passivity – shirking the responsibility to lead. Although I do try to follow the Lord, both of these have been true with me at times. When it has been, it has been because I hate to do things poorly more than I hate being irresponsible to God, and I love my own time more than I love to obey God. That is a hard way to put it, but I think it is true. I think it is often true for many of us guys.

In fact, look at Psalm 78:8-9, as I think it supports that statement. *They are to not be like their fathers – (that is us) – a stubborn, rebellious generation that did not prepare its heart and whose spirit was not faithful to God. The sons of Ephraim were archers equipped with bows, yet they turned back in the day of battle.* Equipped soldiers turning back in the day of battle. Is that us?

God says that the reason He wants us to tell our family throughout the generations of the great praises and deeds of God in our lives and from the Bible is that He wants our kids and grandkids to not forget Him, to put confidence in Him, to obey Him, and to prepare themselves for the battles they are sure to face as they follow Him. So your effort at family devotions has as its goal:

- Keeping the life of faith real with them by talking with them about the Lord
- Reminding them of God's character and attributes, deeds and power
- Helping them not forget Him but remember Him and follow Him
- Helping them be equipped for the battles they will face as they follow Him

But how we do these “devotions” besides these ideas already mentioned? There is no one way to do devotions.

1. **For all ages – the Bible.**

Resources other than the Bible can be good, and we have some good ones below. However, I prefer doing as much as we can straight from the Bible to develop familiarity with and understanding of it.

- **With children age 2-6**, the **NIRV *Read With Me*** story Bible is very good.. It takes the actual text of about 200 Bible stories and illustrates them very effectively. You can read this through in a year if you read one four times per week. You can do it again several times until they are ready for more. Reading these before bedtime, and asking questions of your kids while reading it will bear fruit.
- **With children age 7-11**, the **Adventure Bible (NIV)** is a good one. It is a full text Bible, with art and illustrations and some notes or comments that are age appropriate for your elementary aged children.
- **With young people aged 12-18**, I recommend accurate yet readable Bible versions like the *New American Standard*, *New King James* and *ESV*.

2. **For families with children of various age ranges.** Some families’ age spreads can be tricky at devotional time. At one time, we had a pre-school toddler, an elementary student, a middle school student and a high school student. Just do the best you can to juggle time in the Word, time discussing, time applying, time listening to them and prayer time – while trying to make it peaceable and occasionally, fun. Not easy, but worth working at. You may need to do one with your older kids and your spouse do something different with the younger children.

3. **For families with children from preschool to age 12.**

- The **FBC Web Site KidZone** section is the best single resource I know. You and your child can find at least six different devotion-type ministry links there. Some you can do with your child; some she or he can do by themselves if the Internet is monitored. (While we encourage children to develop habits of being in the Word for themselves by seventh grade, that does not remove the value of family time together.)
- Pastor of Children’s **Ministries Charlie Spencer** is a wealth of information on this topic, as it is the heartbeat of the Children’s Ministry to “Partner With Parents” as they disciple their children. You can correspond with him at charlies@fbcva.org
- We have available some devotions from the early days of the “Generations” series, targeted at kids age 8-14, and you can get those from my office by emailing johnm@fbcva.org .

4. For families whose kids are over age 12.
 - Our **youth pastor John Avery**, our women's youth director Courtney Pantalena and their team of adult youth ministers have provided devotional resources for families of youth in middle school and high school, as well as resources the youth can use themselves.
 - ***Life Training I and II and Faith Training*** by Joe White. These devotions are great for teens and parents to read together and discuss. Joe directed Kannukuck and Kannacomo Summer Camps in the Ozark mountains for many, many years. Those camps are considered some of the best in the country, and Joe's grasp of the Lord and of youth makes these a good resource.
 - See also the third bullet above regarding "Generations" devotions under #3.