



THE FEARLESS FAMILY - Mother's
Day 2016

Prayer for the Offering:

Luke 19:8-9

8 And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." 9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.

Jesus and the apostles saw giving as a heart response to the gospel. May that be our motive for giving also.

God of all grace,
It is our delight and our devotion to give these gifts to You. All we are and all we have are Yours alone. Accept this joyful offering as evidence of our abiding love for You: use it to continue and further the ministry wherever You place us (and show us that soon, Lord),
In Christ's Name.
Amen.

Blessing Upon the Word:

O Mighty Savior, Lord Jesus Christ,
You said the great and first commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our might. You asked Peter three times if he loved You. Today I pray our love for You will fill all our horizons.

You know everything, O Lord, you know the temperature of our souls. You know that as we are gathered here in worship today, we vary in our love for You, and You discern every degree. We cannot fool You. What do we need? We need to see Your death and

resurrection more clearly. And I pray to that end this evening. As our hearts and minds focus upward to the cross, may Your all-knowing gaze show us what we need as Your Word is preached. May You be exalted and may our love for You rise in our souls.

Christ Jesus, we love You for dying on the cross for our sins and rising to new life for our salvation. Refresh us by that love.
In Your name we pray. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

- Encouraging Saturday - being around men who were planting churches, men who were full of bold faith.
- Friend facing cancer
- How does a family face such a scenario? Have you and your family ever faced something similar in your life? What resources did you draw upon to get through? Would you say you all faced the situation fearlessly and courageously?
- That's what we're looking at today — how to become a fearless family.

Joshua 1:1-11

In his new book *Core Christianity*, Michael Horton presents a scenario that makes us think about our views of how life works.

“YOU BROUGHT YOUR THREE-YEAR-OLD into the emergency room for what you thought was a common cold. Within an hour you learn that it’s a fatal disease. Your first thought is to pray. Why?”

- The Gospel - we not only believe the world is broken by sin, but we believe in the God who sent His Son to pay for our sins and make us new creations and who will one day make all things new. Sometimes we get a preview of that newness when God does miraculous things in our lives. That’s why we pray, because that’s the story in live our lives in.

And by story I don’t mean fairytale. I mean that’s the reality that we live our lives in. Some stories correspond to reality and some do not. Our claim as Christians is that there is a story by which all other stories are

measured. “Yes, Virginia, there is a Metanarrative.”

That’s why we pray, because we believe the story of the gospel.

Baylor University just published a study that found about nine out of 10 Americans have relied on prayer at some point in their lives for healing. This should embolden us who know the One who heals to offer to pray for others, especially if they don’t attend church.

Now, Professor Horton goes on in his book and asks us to imagine our neighbor who experiences the same thing. His three-year-old has a fatal disease. “He doesn’t pray because he doesn’t believe in God. Nature plus chance—for him, that’s all there is.”

In his view of life, this really shouldn’t be a problem, but, “of course, he experiences it as a problem. But his experience contradicts what he says he believes about reality. (In other words, it contradicts the story he lives in.) If evolution has wired things for the survival of the fittest,” then the death of his daughter should be expected. “It’s a thinning out of the herd so she can’t pass along her faulty DNA to the rest of the race.”

Now that sounds brutal and it is, because it is a brutal worldview.

Horton then writes, “The story we believe determines which of these approaches to life we will take.”

Today, we’re going to look at what story your family lives in.

Joshua 24:15

15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

What story does your family live in?

It takes a fearless family to confront these questions. It always has. There was controversy in the Jewish community over Jesus ever since He opened the book of Isaiah. To some Jews He was a “stumbling block” just as Isaiah had prophesied centuries earlier (Isa 8:14). To non-Jews, the Gentiles, the gospel wasn’t even worth consideration. It was just “foolishness” (1 Cor 1:23). And Jesus went beyond the philosophers, because Jesus wasn’t just

offering how you can be a better you. He was offering you the chance to become a new creation, a new kind of human.

In this verse in Joshua, we can see three different strains of influence regarding what you believe about life and how it works. And what you believe about life and how it works will either make your family flourish or it will ultimately bring destruction to your family. And by destruction I mean spiritual destruction in death, the destruction of any chance after death of having a relationship with your Creator.

So, let’s look at these three strains of influence.

1. **The first influence we see in this verse is simply sin.**

And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord

Why would it be evil in anyone’s eyes to serve the Lord? Well, let’s go back to the story in the Garden of Eden.

God created the family beautiful and good. God is the most committed advocate for the family. “The history of the human race begins with a wedding” that God himself officiated.

He created a complimentary couple and blessed them.

Genesis 1:28

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

That’s a lot of blessing.

As the great theologian Herman Bavinck said, “God’s artistic work comes into existence bearing the name of home and family.” God created the family to reflect the relational love within the Trinity and then He appointed the family as the primary instrument through which He would accomplish His mission. It has been said that “man is God’s method” to reach the world. How is this good news of Christ going out into the world? Through us. We are God’s method.

But there it was... Rather than accomplishing the mission God gave them of multiplying families... sin.

Sin has devastated the family.

This last week, I had a Bible study with some young men in their twenties and when I

asked them, “If you could ask God one question that you knew He would answer, what would you ask Him?” Two of them asked nearly the same question, which is probably a question that some of you have asked: “Why is life so hard?”

And this is the answer — sin entered into the world and has touched everything from the way you see yourself to the way you see God to the way nature and the animal kingdom refuse to fully cooperate with you.

When Adam and Eve first disobeyed God, they “sinned not only as individuals” but “also as husband and wife, as father and mother.” Sin delivered a devastating blow to the home. It introduced “disunity between Adam and Eve,” filled “Cain with hatred against Abel and incited him to kill his brother,” and it “led Lamech into polygamy,” having multiple wives at the same time, which is a distortion of marriage.

Sin distorts God’s good gifts.

Sin poisons the health of our relationships—first with God — this is why some people can actually say with a straight face that they believe Christianity has brought nothing but evil into the world.

And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord

And it is to some people, because sin distorts our view of God. That's the first thing it does.

- Quote

Then sin poisons our relationship with our spouse, parent, child, sibling, and neighbor.

So, sin is the first influence that colors how you see the world.

2. The second stain of influence is this:

choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River

“The gods your fathers served.” The home you grow up in influences how you see God. There is no such thing as a neutral home. There is no such thing as letting your children decide what they will believe. Some parents say, “We don't want to influence them. They'll choose on their own when they're old enough.” Your silence has already taught them that it's not a question to be concerned about. So, why should they be concerned with God if you're not?

What you believe in the home will influence what your children believe. This brings us to the issue of false belief, not a popular concept in our day. We don't like the idea of calling someone else's beliefs false. “Who are you to judge?” And that is the question. What do you base the truthfulness or the falseness of your beliefs upon? Is there no measurement for you? And if you have no measurement, how do you know there isn't one? Just because you don't know of one doesn't mean there isn't one.

3. The third factor that influences beliefs in the home is:

or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.

“In whose land you dwell.” The other factor that effects what you believe is the culture you swim in. In other words, not only who you live with effects your beliefs (your home), but where you live effects your beliefs (your city, state, country) — the people around you, the society you live in.

If you live in a culture where a majority of people just do not believe that religious claims can be verified, you will more than

likely have a hard time with religious claims yourself. We all happen to live in such a culture. But that is the Christian claim in every culture, that Jesus was raised on the third day and then appeared to Peter and then to the twelve. The testimony is — they verified it.

If you want to dispute that claim, you will have to explain how Christianity developed. How a group of timid believers huddled together in an upper room, fearful that they would also be hunted down and killed after Jesus was killed, somehow turned around and began risking their very lives on this very message that Jesus was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures and that they are witnesses of these things.

4. Now, finally, the greatest factor in all of this is the home.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

The entire household, not just mom.

- Men serving in children’s ministry

Proverbs 1:8-9

8 Hear, my son, your father's instruction,

and forsake not your mother's teaching,

9 for they are a graceful garland for your head

and pendants for your neck.

Notice that children are taught who God is and what God is like by both parents. Teaching is doctrine. Doctrine just means teaching. Your children need doctrine. They need to be taught who Jesus is and what He has done, because...

Christ offers the family hope. God did not leave the family in defeat after the fall. God had big plans for it. He still has big plans for the family. After the fall, God promised Eve that one of her offspring would conquer evil (Genesis 3:15).

Jesus Christ is the only human being to never sin against His Father in heaven and His family on earth. His death for our sins offers hope for forgiveness and reconciliation not only with our earthly families but also with God our Father. Although earthly marriages remain imperfect, they represent the love between Christ and His people more than anything else in creation. Bavinck concludes his book with these hope-filled words: “The history of the human race” also “ends with a wedding,

the wedding of Christ and his church, of the heavenly Lord with his earthly Bride." In Christ, the family finds significance, purpose, and hope and it can fearlessly face the future.

Prayer of Confession:

**Gracious God,
our sins are too heavy to carry,
too real to hide,
and too deep to undo.
Forgive the sins our lips are too ashamed to
name,
what our hearts can no longer bear,
and what has become for us
a consuming fire of judgment.
Set us free from a past that we cannot
change;
open to us a future in which we can be
changed;
and grant us the grace that can only be
found in Your Son,
that we may grow more and more in your
likeness and image;
through Jesus Christ, the light of the world.**