

**“Teaching Godly Fear in Family Worship”, Session # 31 on the 2nd Commandment,  
Presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 6th, 2014,  
in the Adult Sunday School.**

Let me begin this morning by relating to you what Dr. Joel Beeke has said about his parents and what it meant for him and his brother to have been in on these times of their family’s devotions. He says: “When my parents commemorated their fiftieth anniversary, all five of us children decided to express thanks to our father and mother for one thing without consulting each other.” “Remarkably, all five of us thanked our mother for her prayers and all five of us thanked our father for his leadership of our Sunday evening family worship.” “My brother said, ‘Dad, the oldest memory I have is of tears streaming down your face as you taught us from Pilgrim’s Progress on Sunday evening how the Holy Spirit leads believers.’” “At the age of three God used you in family worship to convict me that Christianity was real.” “No matter how far I went astray in later years, I could never seriously question the reality of Christianity, and I want to thank you for that.”

Last week we considered point # 1.

**I. Honoring God is the family making their boast in the Lord.** Psalm 34: 1-5

Notice here, that private worship consists of “blessing the Lord at all times; His praise being “continually in your mouth”. But it only begins there. This praise given to the Lord should be given by the whole family as well. Family worship is the time for the father in the family to lead the family in making his boast in the Lord. “The humble among the family will hear this and rejoice.” This holy “boasting” can be done by a personal word of testimony, or by leading in singing a Psalm or hymn which speaks of what mighty and wondrous things that God has done. A father should try in his own words to relate to the rest of the family times when He prayed and the Lord answered him, and helped him, and delivered him from all his fears. He should be able to relate his own testimony to them of how the Lord saved him from his sins. The object in this is that the Lord’s name would be magnified by him, and as he relates the wonderful works of God, both in the Bible and in his personal life, then his wife and children would also magnify the Lord with him; they will exalt His name, lifting up praise to Him for all the wondrous things that he does for all of them. The father can make his boast in the Lord by sharing the words of the Bible concerning what God has done for the patriarch fathers, for the children of Israel, for David and all the prophets, for the New Testament Church when he reads from each of those portions. When these are read, application can be made by the father to their own family and how the Lord can save them and help them, each and every one. The father can relate how each one can to know and experience the grace of God in conversion, and in the many times which the Lord gave him wisdom and help in the various situations of life. Just reading short portions of the Bible will tend towards this.

Even if a father does not have a speaking or teaching gift, he should be able to read from the Bible of the mighty and wonderful works of God, and call the rest of the family to rejoice with him that the same God who did these saving and keeping wonders so long ago, is the same God for us today. As a father is often relating to his wife and children the reality that God is his strength, and song, and help in the various situations of life, the children will hear this and the parents can pray that the children will then come by faith to Christ, and to know that this God is their God. As they put their trust in their father’s God, they will over time also learn to pray. They will learn to express the same confidence as their father, that God will bless them and help them to do everything that they do to His glory. Exodus 15: 2 – “The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; His is my God, and I will praise Him; my father’s God,

and I will exalt Him.” It is good to begin family worship with praise in relation to what God has done for others before you, and what He has done for you.

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Now, today, we will get into more of the particulars of Family Worship:

## **II. It is good to include a little teaching in a time of in family worship.**

Psalm 34: 8-14 – “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” “Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints!” “There is no want to those who fear Him.” “The young lions lack and suffer hunger, but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.” “Come you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” “Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good?” “Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.” “Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.”

### **a. Teach your children the fear of the Lord**

In your just reading small portions or a chapter of the word of God, you will be giving instruction, fathers. You can see that this was David’s practice with his family, as he relates it in verse 11. “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” David would ask his children to listen to him, and he would teach them the fear of the Lord. I think that the label of children, in the case of this Psalm may go farther than David’s children to the children of Israel, or young believers that he was trying to instruct in general. But surely it will apply to his own children in his own family as well. Family worship is a good place to be able to teach your children to sit and listen. This is a very good thing. Learning to carefully listen is a great part of learning, and a godly father would teach them the fear of the Lord. What does David mean by this?

**There are 2 different kinds of fear** which are spoken of in the Bible; craven fear, and filial fear.

**1<sup>st</sup> - Craven Fear** – Psalm 119, verse 120 – “My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am afraid of Your judgments.”

**Listen to what Thomas Boston says in his “Happiness of Fearing Always”** – “We ought then to entertain a filial and reverential fear of God.” “God is greatly to be feared among the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those around Him.” (Psalm 89: 7) “Slavish fear of God will never denominate, nor make a man happy.” “In reprobates it is like a spark of hell to make them look after heaven.” “Slavish fear of God is a turbulent violent storm in the soul that takes away the heart, and often binds up the hands from duty.” “Thus Adam under its influence hid himself.” “But filial fear glides softly through the soul, watering it to bring forth the fruits of holiness.” “Slavish fear dreads nothing but hell and punishment.” “Filial fear dreads sin itself.” “The displeasing of God is a frightful object in itself to the saint.” “Slavish fear looks at eternal wrath with expectation of it.” “Filial fear also looks at wrath, but no with expectation, though with dread and terror.” “The one is mixed with hatred of God, the other with love to Him—the one looks on him as a revenging Judge, the other as a holy father, to whose holiness the heart is reconciled and the soul longs to be conformed to.”

**2<sup>nd</sup> - Godly fear** – Psalm 103, verse 17 – “But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and His righteousness to children’s children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.”

Psalm 119, verse 63: “I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts.”

Proverbs 14: 25-27 “A true witness delivers souls, but a deceitful witness speaks lies.” “In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.” “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.”

**Joseph Benson says** that the fear of the Lord is: “The true and acceptable way of worshipping and serving God, so that you may please and glorify Him here, and be admitted into His kingdom hereafter.”

**Charles Simeon says:** “The fear of the Lord is such a reverential regard for Him as inclines us to walk in all things according to His revealed will, and to approve ourselves to Him.” (End of quote)

This filial kind of fear is what David would teach his children and which you, fathers, will want to teach your children. Teach your children that if they desire a good life, and if they want to see many days, that they may see good, tell them to keep their tongue from evil, and their lips from speaking deceit. Much can be taught during times of family devotion concerning right speech. It should be told to our children that God takes notice of how and what they speak; and that the person of continual careless speech will have to render an account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word that they shall speak. But teach them also the Proverb which is found in Chapter 25, verse 11 of Proverbs: “Like apples of gold in settings of silver, so is a word which is spoken at the proper time, or under right circumstances.” In fact, the book of Proverbs is good to go through with your children, and convenient as well. It has 31 chapters for 31 days of the month. Not that you would have to do a whole chapter a day, but it is convenient.

**b. Teach them the commandments of God and tell them of the spirituality of the law of God.**

Deuteronomy 11: 18 – “Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.” “You shall teach them to your children, speaking of the when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” “And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth.”

**c. Teach them also of their need of repentance.**

Psalms 34: 12-14 - “Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good?” “Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.” “Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.”

Explain to your children that God expects this from all of His children; that they would depart from evil and do good. Both are essential to becoming holy. Both require the grace of Christ. Never let your children get the impression that they are able to do what is right on their own, apart from the grace of Christ. You may raise up little Pharisees if you simply teach them the ten commandments and other wonderful moral truths. Teaching the commandments of God and catechizing your children good; they must learn right from wrong, but make sure that you show them the spirituality of the law of God; that obedience is not simply outward conformity to the commandments of God, but it is inward delight in doing what is right, and learning by grace to try to please God. Remember the two sons in Luke 15 in the Prodigal Son. The older son said to his father that he had never transgressed his father’s command at any time, and yet his father had never had a party for him that he might make merry with his friends. He complains that as

soon as the other son had come back from the far country, he killed the fatted calf for him. But the Father's response was: "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours." "It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for our brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found." What was the older son's problem? He was comparing himself with the younger son and what the younger son received from the father. He was angry with his father because he thought that he had kept all the commandments and deserved the party and the fatted calf. He did not understand that it takes grace to keep the commandments from right motives; that is of trying to please God by and through the grace which is received only through Christ Jesus. This is a good place to teach the difference between law and grace – in family worship. This is a good place to teach about repentance and faith in Christ.

**d. Most of all – Show them Christ in all the Scripture portions that you read –**

Luke 24: 27 – "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." This is what our Lord did with the 2 on the road to Emmaus. Their reaction is found in verse 32 – "And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He opened the Scriptures to us?'" Even so, this is the way to warm the hearts of your children to looking for Christ in all of the Scriptures. Remember explain the gospel to your younger children and unsaved older children regularly in family worship, in order that they might be saved, and that they might be taught to cultivate a relationship with the Savior.

**Joel Beeke on Implementing Family Worship, the Section on Biblical instruction –**  
(Taken from Issue #118 of the Free Grace Broadcaster)

**Be plain in meaning:** Ask your children if they understand what you are reading. Be plain in applying scriptural texts. The 1647 Church of Scotland Directory provides counsel here: "The Holy Scriptures should be read ordinarily to the family; and it is commendable, that thereafter they confer, and by way of conference, make some good use of what hath been read and heard. As, for example, if any sin be reprov'd in the word read, use may be made thereof to make all the family circumspect<sup>92</sup> and watchful against the same; or if any judgment be threatened that portion of scripture which is read, use may be made to make all the family fear lest the same or a worse judgment befall them, unless they beware of the sin that procured it: and finally, if any duty be required, or comfort held forth in a promise, use may be made to stir up themselves to employ Christ for strength to enable them for doing the commanded duty, and to apply the offered comfort in all which the master of the family is to have the chief hand; and any member of the family may propose a question or doubt for resolution" (par. III).

**Encourage family dialogue** around God's Word in line with the Hebraic procedure of household question and answer (cf. Exodus 12; Deuteronomy 6; Psalm 78). Especially encourage teenagers to ask questions: draw them out. If you don't know the answers, tell them so; and encourage them to search for answers. Have one or more good commentaries on hand, such as those by John Calvin, Matthew Poole, and Matthew Henry. Remember, if you don't provide answers for your children, they will get them elsewhere—and often those will be wrong answers. Be pure in doctrine: Titus 2:7 says, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity." Don't abandon doctrinal precision when teaching young children; aim for simplicity and soundness.

**Be relevant in application:** Don't be afraid to share your experiences when appropriate, but do that simply. Use concrete illustrations. Ideally, tie together Biblical instruction with what you recently heard in sermons.

**Be affectionate in manner:** Proverbs continually uses the phrase “my son,” showing the warmth, love, and urgency in the teachings of a God-fearing father. When you must administer the wounds of a father-friend to your children, do that with heartfelt love. Tell them you must convey the whole counsel of God because you can’t bear the thought of spending eternity apart from them. My father often said to us with tears: “Children, I cannot miss any of you in heaven.” Tell your children: “We will allow you every privilege an open Bible will allow us to give you— but if we say no to you, you must know that flows out of our love.” As Ryle said: “Love is one grand secret of successful training. Soul love is the soul of all love.”

**Require attention:** Proverbs 4:1 says, “Hear, ye children, the instruction a father, and attend to know understanding.” Fathers and mothers have important truths to convey. You must demand a hearing for God’s truths in your home. That may involve repeated statements at the beginning like these: “Sit up, son, and look at me when I’m talking. We’re talking about God’s Word, and God deserves to be heard.” Don’t allow children to leave their seats during Family Worship.