

A Church in the House: Fathers Leading Families in Worship¹ Psalm 78:1-7

INTRODUCTION

- **Dt. 20:5** - The officers also shall speak to the people, saying, ‘Who is the man that has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would dedicate it.
- This is a good and righteous goal – when a man has a house of his own and dedicates it to the service and glory of God.
- **QUOTE**: Matthew Henry, the great Puritan preacher, wrote a sermon entitled ‘A Church in the House.’ There is a book by that name which you can find on my [blog](#).² You will hear a lot from Henry this morning because of everything I have read, his words and truth about this subject are amazingly penetrating. **I would encourage every husband and father to read that sermon every year.** He says in that message: “I know not any thing that will contribute more to the furtherance of this good work [the pursuit of piety] than the bringing of family religion more into practice and reputation. **Here the reformation must begin.** Other methods may check the disease we complain of, but this, if it might universally obtain, would cure it. Salt must be cast into these springs, and then the waters would be healed.”³
- **My goal in preaching is to help husbands and fathers begin and renew family worship in their homes.**
- Churches are sacred societies who gather for the honor and service of Christ. So should our homes be. Our families should regularly and intentionally gather for the honor and service of Christ in the home. And as in churches men lead in the **worship, instruction and discipline** of its members, so fathers should lead in their homes. Just as Christ is prophet, priest and king over the church, so should fathers and husbands be in their homes. We are **prophets** in that we speak and teach the Word of God. We are **priests** in that we lead the rest of our families to worship, prayer and service. We are **kings** in that we establish order and discipline for the glory of God in our homes and relationships. As **prophets**, we must be diligent to maintain family doctrine. As **priests**, we must be diligent to maintain family prayer. As **kings**, we must be diligent to maintain family discipline.

SCRIPTURE TEACHES FATHERS TO LEAD WORSHIP IN THE HOME IN THREE WAYS.

- I. FATHERS LEAD WORSHIP IN THE HOME BY INSTRUCTING IN DOCTRINE.
- II. FATHERS LEAD WORSHIP IN THE HOME BY PRAISE AND PRAYER.
- III. FATHERS LEAD WORSHIP IN THE HOME BY LOVING DISCIPLINE.

¹ This message, and much of its content, is taken from Matthew Henry’s sermon by the title *A Church in the House*. I urge my fellow fathers and husbands to read this sermon regularly – at least once a year – to encourage them in the purpose, goals and practices of family worship. I cannot recommend his work highly enough.

² <http://www.berryroad.com/pastorsdesk/?p=309>.

³ Matthew Henry, *Family Religion: Principles for Raising a Godly Family*. Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2008), 28.

I. FATHERS LEAD WORSHIP IN THE HOME BY INSTRUCTING IN DOCTRINE.

- **Ps. 78:1-7** - 1 Listen, O my people, to my instruction; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, 3 which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. 4 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. 5 For **He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children**, 6 that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children, 7 that they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments,
- **[PRAY]**
- The command is to tell – speak, declare, teach, instruct. What do we tell? The **praises** of the Lord, His **strength**, His **wondrous works**. How do we tell them? What tools has God given us to instruct the next generation in ways of God? He established a testimony, a law to teach our children. **God designs for His glorious works to be passed down to each generation through the teaching of His Word by fathers who lead families in worship.**
- **Read the bible to your family!** Husbands – read it to and with your spouse. Fathers – read it to and with your children.
- We are blessed in our time to have English Bibles in many translations, some of which are particularly useful for reading to children. Do you realize that **scores of men died to make sure that you and I have Bibles to read**. Don't take it for granted. Use them!
- **QUOTE**: Matthew Henry said, “It is better to be without bread in your house than without Bibles, for the words of God’s mouth are and should be to you more than your necessary food.”⁴
- Not only should you read the Bible, but you should **catechize** and **question** your family about what you read. You should instruct them in **doctrine**. What does this mean? How does this apply? What does this tell us about our God? How should our family respond to this Word? Our children need to see that the Scripture speaks to us directly and addresses our daily lives down to the smallest details. We must teach our families a **biblical worldview** and this will only happen with **diligent, constant instruction**.
- Furthermore, this instruction in the home will lay a foundation for fruitful ministry in the church. If children are not taught at home to listen and learn the Word, they will not do it in church! If they are not taught the value of private devotion at home, they will not see the value of public worship in God’s sanctuary.
- **QUOTE**: Henry: “This way of instruction by catechizing does in a special manner belong to the church in the house; for that is the nursery in which the trees of righteousness are reared, that afterwards are planted in the courts of our God. **Public catechizing** [preaching] will turn to little account without **family catechizing**. The labour of ministers in instructing youth and feeding the lambs of the flock therefore proves to many labour in vain, because **masters of families** [**fathers**] do not do their duty in preparing them for public instruction and examining their improvement by it. As mothers are children’s best nurses, so parents are, or should be, their best teachers.”⁵

⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

- After being an **Awana** leader I am convinced that we underestimate our children's ability to comprehend and remember Scripture and doctrine. Let us consider that **God created children to give Him praise** and that Jesus Himself often received such from them. Therefore, they are capable of learning and understanding biblical doctrine. And God has commanded parents – primarily fathers – to be their teachers.
- **APP**: Buy your children books and give them incentives to read and think about them. Go to Mardel and they have sections for almost every age child and pick books appropriate for their instruction. Immerse them in Christian biographies of great saints of history.
- **Eph. 6:4** – “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and **instruction** of the Lord.” That word ‘instruction’ (**νουθεσία**) means ‘teaching,’ ‘admonition,’ sometimes ‘warning.’ That is what we are to bring our children up in – God’s teachings, God’s instructions, God’s warnings.
- **Men** – this is why God made you a father. It was not to carry on your name! God made you a dad so you could declare His glory in your household and tell of His works from one generation to another.
- This is **real manhood**. This is **strong leadership**. This is **God-fearing courage**. This is the **war** we were made to fight as fathers – for the hearts and souls of our children.
- *Resources for family doctrine:*
 - [Training Hearts Teaching Minds: Family Devotions Based on the Shorter Catechism](#) by Starr Meade
 - [Leading Little Ones to God: A Child's Book of Bible Teachings](#) by Marian M. Schoolland

first we must lead worship by instructing in doctrine, second...

II. FATHERS LEAD WORSHIP IN THE HOME BY PRAISE AND PRAYER.

- **Ps. 145:1-4** - 1 I will extol You, my God, O King, and I will bless Your name forever and ever. 2 Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. 3 Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable. 4 **One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts**.
- Fathers should lead worship in their homes by praising God and praying to God. Praise often comes in the form of song and music, but it does not always. You can praise God in prayer or song or doxology or all of those things.
- **Praise**: Some of you have **magnificent musical gifts**. And it is often said that God gave those gifts to be used in church. I don't disagree at all with that. In fact, I wholeheartedly agree with that. BUT you are only in church a few hours a week and you are at home every day. So to think that God gave parents musical gifts and abilities just to use in church is absurd. Those gifts should be used every day right in your homes with your families! With the ease of technology, any family who wants to sing can sing. We have DVD's, CD's, internet sites and you can sing *whatever* you want, *whenever* you want as a family.
- **Prayer**: Pray as a family. Not just over meals and at bedtime (which are wonderful), but at specific times and for specific reasons. Pray when you are **hurting**. Pray when you are **rejoicing**. Pray for **school**. Pray for **friends**. Pray for **church**. Pray for **neighbors** – TOGETHER!
- Use **A.C.T.S.** to pray as a family: **A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, **S**upplication.

- Pray **ESPECIALLY** when there are family needs. **ILL**: needing \$300 for Christmas money
- *Resources for family singing and prayer:*
 - [The Family Worship Book: A Resource Book for Family Devotions](#) by Terry L. Johnson
 - [Praying the Scriptures for Your Children](#) by Jodie Berndt
 - [Powerful Prayer for Every Family](#) by Greg Frizzell

first we must lead worship by instructing in doctrine, second lead worship by praise and prayer, third...

III. FATHERS LEAD WORSHIP IN THE HOME BY LOVING DISCIPLINE.

- The word ‘**loving**’ there is an adjective to discipline. It describes the motive and manner of our discipline as parents. We should not be **drill sergeants** in our homes. Our discipline should flow from a love for God first and a love and compassion for our children’s spiritual well being second.
- **Eph. 6:4** – “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Notice the **first negative prohibition** that is related to discipline – **don’t make them angry!** The wrong kind of discipline or the wrong motivation and manner of discipline will lead to angry children rather than trained children.
- Our **authority** as parents is given to us by God for the purpose of raising children with spiritual discipline and soft hearts for the gospel message. When that authority is abused – either by **misuse** or by **non-use** – then our children get a distorted picture of God and will not know Him as He reveals Himself. **You paint a picture of God by the way you love and discipline your children.**
- **Heb. 12:5-11** - 5 ...“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; 6 For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.” 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; should we not also be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His **holiness**. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be **joyful**, but **sorrowful**; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.
- Be like God in your home fathers. Discipline your family with love and a heart for holiness and a desire for the gospel to reign in your children.
- One of the best ways to make sure you balance love and discipline in your home is to intentionally and constantly **praise your children** in their obedience. **We all prefer to be led rather than driven, and we all love to be spoken kindly to.** So when you see your children doing well, especially in worship, praise them! Encourage them! Rejoice in them and with them!

- **QUOTE:** Henry: “Draw them with the cords of a man, hold them with the bands of love; so shall your rebukes, when they are necessary, be the more acceptable and effectual.”⁶
- *Resources for family discipline:*
 - [Shepherding a Child's Heart](#) by Tedd Tripp
 - [The New Dare to Discipline](#) by James C. Dobson

CONCLUSION

- **2 Tim. 3:12-15** - 12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13 But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that **from childhood** you have known the **sacred writings** which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
- **2 Tim. 1:5** - For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.
- **Fathers** (by applications also mothers and grandparents) – what **legacy** will you leave for your children? What could more valuable, honorable and enjoyable for generations than to leave a legacy of family worship?
- **Help** one another in this. **Encourage** one another in this work. **Get ideas** from one another. And pray with me that God would cause us to desire His worship in our home more often than outside of it.

Other resources for family worship:

- [Family Worship: In the Bible, in History & in Your Home](#) by Donald S. Whitney (<http://www.biblicalspirituality.org/>)
- [A Church in the House](#) by Matthew Henry, ed. by Scott Brown. The same sermon “A Church in the House” can also be found in [Family Religion: Principles for raising a Godly Family](#) by Matthew Henry. This book has additional sermons and writings for family worship.
- [Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God](#) by Voddie Baucham
- <http://www.visionforum.com>
- <http://www.BiblicalSpirituality.org>

⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.