

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“. . . Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY AND DEVOTION

Part Two

by Lee Moses

The Sacred Scriptures point to several examples of family Bible study and devotion. Abraham and Job were men of God who taught their families God's word and emphasized family worship (Genesis 18:19; Job 1:5). Israelites were commanded to teach their children diligently and often, as parents were to serve as their children's primary source of religious education (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 11:19-21). It was largely through the influence and teaching of his godly mother and grandmother that Timothy served the Lord from youth and throughout his life (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). Family Bible study and devotions in the home serve an indispensable role in leading our children to the Lord, and in cultivating the church of tomorrow.

The Importance of Family Bible Study and Devotion Today

Regular Bible study and devotion are essential to anyone's spiritual development and spiritual life. This includes Christians whether or not they have children, and it includes children who are in the embryonic stage of whatever their spiritual life will be. Yes, public worship plays an important part in this; however, public worship is not daily, there are times when a more private setting is necessary, and at times children need to worship and study God's word solely with their families.

Devotion is defined as "an act of prayer or private worship"; or "a religious exercise or practice other than the regular corporate worship of a congregation."¹ The word itself never appears in the Common Version of the Bible; it does appear once in the American Standard Version (Job 15:4).

But the concept certainly shows itself often.

One cannot read the book of Psalms without being struck by its call to private devotion in addition to public worship. "*My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up*" (Psalm 5:3; see also 1:2; 55:17; 119:97). We have already seen it to be the case with Abraham, Job, and Timothy's mother and grandmother; but righteous men and women of God have always been men and women of devotion (Psalm 90:1ff; Daniel 6:10; Ephesians 3:13; 2 Timothy 4:13). Christ filled His life with private devotion, shared particularly with those to whom He was closest (Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12; 11:1; Matthew 26:29, 36-41). Modern-day followers of Christ should do the same, filling their own lives and the lives of their families with the blessings of devotion.

Many Christian parents continue to deceive themselves into believing that because they are faithful, and because they regularly bring their children to the assemblies of the church, that their children are guaranteed to become faithful Christians throughout their lives. However, faith is not automatically inherited. There is no denying the power and necessity of good Christian examples, especially when seen in a child's parents. However, what brings faith is the word of God (Romans 10:17). So ought not children to be taught the word of God on a regular basis? Jesus said, "*It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" (Matthew 4:4; quoting Deuteronomy 8:3). If we usually make it a point to eat every day—and to feed our children every day—to sustain physical

health, does it not follow that we should feed on and feed them the word of God every day to sustain **spiritual** health?

As noted last month, the Israelite parents themselves were given the primary responsibility for educating their children. Oh, children were certainly expected to be present at the assemblies, where they could learn essential truths and the importance of obeying those truths (Deuteronomy 31:11-13). But Moses and the LORD emphasized, "*Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons* [*make them known unto thy children and thy children's children,* American Standard Version]" (4:9; compare with 6:6-9; 11:19-21). And today, the responsibility of providing children a Christian upbringing lies with Christian parents—not the church! "*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4, emphasis LM).

This is not to deny the place of the church in this, as part of a good Christian upbringing **demand**s bringing children regularly to the services of a faithful church. The church is obligated to proclaim the Truth (Philippians 2:15-16; Acts 8:1, 4; 2 Timothy 2:2), and parents would be foolish not to take advantage of opportunities for their children to learn God's word in Truth, wherever such opportunities might exist. As the apostle Peter journeyed toward Cornelius's house to preach the words of salvation, "*Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends*" (Acts 10:24). He wanted to be

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sure that those whom he loved most heard Peter's words, and parents should be every bit as attentive toward their children.

However, as an old Scottish proverb says, "An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy." The erroneous denominational separation of clergy and laity within the church aside—along with the fact that a pound of denominational "clergy" isn't worth much—there is a valuable point here. Parents who regularly inculcate their children with God's word and spend time with them in private devotion will carry far more influence toward their children's future faithfulness than will a preacher or Bible class teacher. Just as elders have the awesome trust committed to them of watching for the souls of the congregation, parents have the similarly tremendous responsibility of watching for the souls of their children. No parent should ever want to receive an assessment akin to what the Lord said of Eli: "*For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not*" (1 Samuel 3:13).

Commenting on the above-quoted Deuteronomy 4:9, Adam Clarke warned, "If a man know the worth of his own soul, he will feel the importance of the salvation of the souls of his family. Those who neglect family religion, neglect personal religion; if more attention were paid to the former, even among those called religious people, we should soon have a better state of civil society. On family religion God lays much stress; and no head of a family can neglect it without endangering the final salvation of his own soul."²

Also, families themselves are strengthened by regular Bible study and devotion in the home. Marriages are strengthened when their Biblical foundation is reinforced, and marriages are strengthened when husband and wife study, pray, and sing spiritual songs together. As has been said, "The family that prays together, stays together." Families are strengthened when they remind themselves of the great cause for which they together stand. Just as should the church, families should "*build up yourselves on your most holy faith*" (Jude 20). Joshua was able to speak confidently not only of himself, but also of his family. Regardless of whether the majority of Israelites deteriorated into corruption and idolatry (which they did), he was able to assert, "*But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*" (Joshua 24:15). When we think of the reasons for the wide-scale deterioration of the American home today, one clear reason jumps out—God and the Bible have been removed. Removing God and the Bible from the home is like building a tower with blocks, then kicking over the table under the tower, and expecting the tower to stand.

How can a child be expected to put the Lord first when he is outside the home if the Lord is not first in the home? The psalmist asked, "*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word*" (Psalm 119:9). Ought not then a young man (or woman) to have that emphasized at home before leaving home? Daniel was taken into captivity among pagans when still in his youth. But even in advanced age, Daniel kept his practice of praying privately to God three times

daily (Daniel 6:10). Where did he learn this? He certainly did not learn it among the pagans of his adulthood, so one is forced to conclude that he learned this practice in his youth. Solomon warned, "*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them*" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Parents can, should, and must help their children remember their Creator, especially while their children are yet in their homes.

The home is the first and most important classroom children will attend. Parents can have a tremendous impact on a child's spirituality through the rest of his life, particularly by means of family Bible study and devotion.

Components of Family Bible Study and Devotion

Although desirous of implementing family Bible study and devotion in their homes, some parents are uncertain and overwhelmed with how actually to **do** it. There is certainly room for leeway—no two families do their family devotions exactly the same, and any family may approach one day's devotional differently from that of the previous day. But successful family devotions share certain common traits.

The first step toward successful family devotions is simply planning to have them. Many families choose to have their devotions first thing in the morning, to begin their day on the right foot and with the right thoughts (compare with Psalms 5:3; 88:13; 119:47; Mark 1:35). Others prefer to have them immediately before or after supper. Still others choose to have them right before bedtime. Whatever your preference, set a regular time for family devotion and **stick to it!**

Also, a certain amount of planning for the **content** of the devotional is needed. What are you going to discuss? What songs are you going to sing? What verses are you going to memorize?

Keeping goals in mind of what children need to be instructed helps to focus the Bible study and devotion. Keep in mind that children need to learn about the nature and character of God. They need to learn about the importance of pleasing Him (Matthew 7:21; 12:50;

25:14-46). They need to learn about His forgiveness (Isaiah 55:6-7). They need to be reminded of the great sacrifice of Christ, and never allowed to forget how great that sacrifice was and is! (2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 John 4:10). Children need to learn the importance of holiness, of remaining distinct from the world and set apart for the Lord's use (Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16). Children need to learn the specifics of righteous and godly living (Proverbs 4:11-12).

Obviously, the more planning that goes into it, the more fulfilling the devotional period is likely to be. However, a family can still have a rewarding Bible study and devotional when planning time is not in abundance. A family can study through a book of the Bible, and simply pick up where they left off the previous time. Or a family might study through a devotional book or topical study written by a faithful brother in Christ. Or, if need be, parents can quickly choose a passage for the family, and all can then study it by collectively asking and answering these important questions: (1) What does the passage **say**? Beyond reading the passage, have members of the family paraphrase the passage in their own words, to ensure that they grasp the general thought being conveyed; (2) What does the passage **mean**? Considering the situation of the original readers, how would they have understood it? How would they have been expected to respond to the teaching? (3) What does the passage mean **to you**? How can you live out these teachings in your life? What corrections will you need to make to do this? A family asking and answering these questions together can help each other come to a better understanding of God's word, and can have an enriching period of Bible study and devotion even with just a couple minutes of preparation. So even the busiest of families cannot use their busyness as an excuse for neglecting family Bible study and devotion.

As the God-ordained spiritual leader of the household, the **father** should provide the leadership for regular family devotions. If the father is not a Christian, or refuses to take the lead, the mother may have to take the lead in a sense. Unlike his mother, Timothy's father was

an unbelieving Greek (Acts 16:1). Thus his mother, with the apparent assistance of his grandmother, was forced to oversee the spiritual instruction of her son (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). Whoever is over-seeing family devotions will need to be wise in structuring them, so that confusion does not arise over male/female roles in worship.

Singing and prayer are important components of family devotions. In the midst of the spiritual instruction Christ was giving His apostles shortly before His arrest and death, He took time for both: "*And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives*" (Matthew 26:30; see also John 17:1-26). Singing songs that teach spiritual truths serve as a valuable tool toward children's **learning** of spiritual truths: "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*" (Colossians 3:16). And one can never have dependence upon God without regular prayer. Teach your children to "*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you*" (1 Peter 5:6-7). A godly family will indeed "*Pray without ceasing*" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Conclusion

Modern families seem to be busier than ever. As such, finding time for Bible study and devotion often fails to receive the priority it should.

But outside commitments and time constraints are not the only foes of the family on the rise. More than ever, ungodly influences are bombarding our children. Now is not the time to **diminish** parents' influence on their children, much less the **Bible's** influence upon children. Now is the time for families to make a firm commitment to engage in regular Bible study and devotion, in addition to regularly assembling with a faithful church of our Lord.

¹ Webster's 9th New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, MA: Merriam Webster, 1991), p. 348.

² Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible, e-Sword.

A DESIGNED DEFENSE

by Roelf L. Ruffner

"He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: Also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

God made an **incredible** creature when he created the Japanese Giant Hornet (*Vespa mandarinia japonica*). These predators (over 2 inches long) can decimate domesticated European honeybee hives, killing thousands of workers in order to obtain the bee larvae/pupae to feed to its own offspring. But this is not the case with a native wild honey bee hive. Notice the following:

When a hornet scout locates and approaches a Japanese honey bee hive it will emit specific pheromonal hunting signals. When the honey bees detect these pheromones, a hundred or so will gather near the entrance of the nest and set up a trap, keeping it open apparently to draw the hornet further into the hive or allow it to enter on its own. As the hornet enters the nest, a large mob of about five hundred honey bees surrounds it, completely covering it and preventing it from moving, and begin quickly vibrating their flight muscles. This has the effect of raising the temperature of the honey bee mass to 47 °C (117 °F). The honey bees can tolerate this temperature, but the hornet cannot survive more than 46 °C (115 °F), so it dies. Often several bees perish along with the intruder, but the death of the hornet scout prevents it from summoning reinforcements which would wipe out the colony. More recent research indicates, however, that while the raised temperature of the bee ball contributes to the death of the hornet, it alone is not sufficient to kill the hornet. The bee balls also produce a much higher level of carbon dioxide which contributes to the hornet's death, although whether this is because it reduces

the hornet's tolerance for high temperatures or actually suffocates it, is not known.¹

Evolutionists would have us believe that this response to the giant hornets by the Japanese honey bee is a product of millions of years of trial and error by this insect. Perhaps an **imaginary** conversation went this way:

Queen: "Sisters have you come up with a plan to defeat our enemy, the giant hornet?"

Worker spokesperson: "Yes, your majesty. After 1 million years we have **designed** a plan for our defense. Knowing the physiology of the hornet and our physiology we calculate it will take 500 of us to defeat one of them. We are glad that this plan was created from data recorded at Honey Bee U. and field tested over the last ten thousand years."

Queen: "Thank you for your work. Be sure and write your plan down since most of you will end your lifecycle in a few weeks. I plan to incorporate it into my genes to pass on to my offspring soon."

This is how intellectually silly the theory of evolution is! Do they honestly believe that by chance the honey bee could have come up with a **plan of defense** that takes into account both insects' tolerance to heat? But this is the arrogance of this false philosophy. How puny faulty human reasoning is compared to the creative power of God!

When Job encountered the Eternal Mind he repented of his false reasoning.

Then Job answered the Lord and said: 'I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know (Job 42:1-3, New King James Version).

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_giant_hornet

GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP

- COLOSSIANS 3:17

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16: 1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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