

LVI. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics in Biblical Perspective

What Does the Bible Say?

“Personal and Family Worship—Getting Started”

II Timothy 3:11

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If I had the chance to disciple everyone in the church this would be a topic I would choose to disciple them on, personal and family worship but I'm glad I get the privilege to do a study on this with you. Hopefully this will be helpful to you. Let's start by looking at II Timothy 3 from which we get our statement of inspiration of Scripture. Paul is speaking to Timothy, his son in the faith, his disciple. II Timothy 3:10–11 says *[10] You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, [11] my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.*

We can see here that Timothy had the faith modeled for him in the midst of a broken world and under persecution, Timothy was mentored in the faith by instruction and Timothy was encouraged in the relationship for it wasn't just informational discipleship but it was a relational discipleship that took place between the two of them. Then Paul gives Timothy a reminder in the next verse. II Timothy 3:12–17 says *[12] Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, [13] while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. [14] But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it [15] and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. [16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God^[b] may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

Here you see the necessity, authority, inerrancy, infallibility and the sufficiency of Scripture but you also see that this Scripture can't just be in the book and vibrate into our lives. It has to be modeled, mentored and ministered into the lives of someone. Paul ministered the faith from the Word of God into Timothy's life but Paul was not the first one. There had been others before Paul that had ministered to Timothy. In fact, from childhood he had known the sacred writings which are able to give you wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

There are also some interesting things theologically here as well. What Bible/Scripture would Timothy by necessity and chronologically have to be taught from as a child? That would have been the Old Testament. Yet Paul makes clear that the Old Testament is not a primitive communication but a progressive communication and that it flowers into the Gospel of saving grace in Jesus Christ which is not a New Testament invention but a New Testament amplification. It is an Old Testament reality. Timothy was taught the Scriptures that were able to give him the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. In other words, the salvation that we have in Christ is not a New Testament phenomena but it is an Old Testament reality that is simply unfolded progressively and comes to its fruit and flower in the New Testament.

I have tried before to illustrate this that studying the Old Testament is like walking through a dimly lit beautiful room. Then the New Testament turns on the light and now you see

all the beauty that you already anticipated in its dimly lit fashion but now in its perfections. So the better covenant is not a new covenant of message but a new covenant in clarity as it brings amplification. The most important thing for you to know though is that the Scripture they had which wasn't the whole Bible yet was fully taught to Timothy. Someone had done it from his childhood. Now let's go back to II Timothy 1.

II Timothy 1:3–5 says [3] *I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. [4] As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. [5] I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.* Now we know who in Timothy's childhood was teaching him.

This text has always interested me because my grandmother's name was Lois. There were many verses and Bible songs that she taught me that later in my rebellion came back to me where I could remember them in the darkest moments of my life. It was kind of like that tackle that would rein me back in no matter how hard I wanted to go in that other direction. So a mother and grandmother had invested in Timothy. This is what I want to get to in this study.

One key/instrument that is important but neglected is evangelizing and discipling our children in the faith, once and for all delivered to the saints. It is sometimes understandably neglected but not excusably neglected. So I want to go over family worship and how to communicate the faith in childhood. It is the family altar as it used to be called. It is the family worship time together and I want to show its relationship to personal worship.

I would like to give some recommended reading on this. The first is a book titled [A Neglected Grace: Family Worship in the Christian Home](#) by Jason Helopoulos. In a bigger sense in evangelizing and discipling your children Ruth and Tim Sisemore have written an excellent book titled [World-Proof Your Kids: Raising Children Unstained by the World](#) and the relationship that family worship has with that. Another book I would recommend is titled [Instructing a Child's Heart](#) by Tedd and Margy Tripp. Another book is [A Call to Family Reformation](#) by Dennis Rainey. One of the central elements to any reformation whether it's the church or the family is the matter of worship.

One book I absolutely love is not as readable because it was written by a Puritan but if you hang with them it's absolutely astounding how they expose a text of Scripture and it's called [Family Religion: Principles for Raising a Godly Family](#) by Matthew Henry. He builds family religion from the baptism of our covenant children all the way through their life bringing them to Christ by bringing the Gospel to their life. This book to me is just an absolute blessing and it is put out by a publishing company called Christian Focus. Having given you these helps I now want to walk through a couple of things with you in this study. First, I want to give you a perspective, then seven blessings and then seven principles.

I want to start by giving you a perspective on this matter of family worship. Why is this important? Let's start back literally at the beginning. When we speak of God we speak of God in His three Persons. It is One God who dwells in three Persons. When we speak of Him this way we speak of His attributes and His actions. In a recent praise song a line said, 'Lord, we praise You not just for what You've done but for who You are.' I know what they are trying to say here but here is what you and I need to know. Who God is and what God does, there is never any differentiation. He is always God. He never quits being God. He doesn't even need a vacation.

Do you know one of the reasons God gave us a Sabbath? It is to remind us that we may be made in His image but we're not Him. God gives us a Sabbath to rest because we need it.

God established a Sabbath and observed it to teach us but He doesn't need it. He neither slumbers nor sleeps. The God of glory is wholly other than us and when He acts He always acts consistently with His Person.

There are three acts of God we want to focus on – creation, redemption and providence. Creation is where God made us. Redemption is God saves His people from their sins. Providence is where God upholds all things even the unbeliever by the Word of His power and He also has a promise of providence to us. It is why we can sing 'it is well with our soul.' God has promised that all things as He upholds us will work together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

If God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the Trinity at work in creation, redemption and providence then why is God creating, redeeming and sustaining? It is to the praise of His glorious grace. Why did God make you? He made you for His glory. Why did God save you? It was for His glory. Why did God uphold us by the Word of His power? He did it for His glory. The chief end of man, created, redeemed and sustained, is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

The catechism question is composed in a very interesting way. 'What is the chief end of man' is singular. It is to glorify and enjoy Him which are two ends but in the question it is just an end singular and not plural so what would it not say 'what are the chief ends of man'? Have they made a mistake grammatically? No, they have made a grammatical point of a theological exclamation and that is to glorify God you have to enjoy Him and to enjoy Him you have to glorify Him. In other words, the more you glorify Him the more you'll enjoy Him. They are two sides of one coin. They are two sides of one purpose and they feed each other. One is intentional and the other is relational. The more you intentionally glorify Him the more you will enjoy Him. The more you enjoy Him the more you will desire to intentionally glorify Him.

When we realize we were made, saved and sustained to glorify God and enjoy Him, what is the primary means whereby His people glorify and enjoy Him? It is worship. We were made, saved and sustained to worship God. That is the perspective that we begin to establish. There are two dynamics of worship. There is lifestyle worship and that is summed up in Romans 12. Romans 12:1 says *[1] I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* In other words, the way you live your life ought to be a worship statement. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 10:31, *[31] So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* Everything in life is a worship statement to God. I'm either engaged in *latria* which is the theological word for worship, or I'm engaged in *idolatria* that is the worship of the idols that I have created to worship myself. So I am asking God to allow me to engage in lifestyle worship.

Now lifestyle worship has two parts – secret and public. You don't want to do your secret worship publicly but you're secret worship helps you do public worship. What do I mean by this? The way I work at my job is to be a worship statement. Colossians 3:23 says *[23] Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.* This is an act of worship. The way I love my wife and lead my wife is a statement of worship to God. The way a wife responds to her husband is an act of worship. Ephesians 5:22 says *[22] Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* Parenting is an act of public worship where you raise your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. All of life lived in the public square is to be an act of worship by the Christian even down to eating and drinking.

There is also secret worship. We call this are personal devotions. Sometimes we call it our quiet time. Campus Outreach used to call is TAWG – time alone with God. Jesus condemns

when we do our private worship publicly. He knows private worship feeds your public worship but He tells us when we are praying and spending time with the Lord alone we are to go to our closet. That will lead you into public worship in your public life. So, do your private worship privately so you can be prepared to do your public worship publicly. So lifestyle worship has a private element and a public element.

Gathered worship is the second kind of worship that we have. Gathered worship is what Hebrews 10:25 tells us; *[25] not neglecting to meet together (assemble together), as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.* We are praising God together. The priority of life is gathered worship. Gathered worship also has two pieces to it – family worship and the family of God worship (corporate worship). Just like private worship feeds public worship in lifestyle worship, so also family worship feeds corporate worship and corporate worship feeds family worship so that we have gathered worship to the praise of God. Gathered worship is what Jesus says that He seeks in John 4:23 which says *[23] But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.* You can't be a true worshiper if you don't bring true worship and you can't be a true worshiper unless you worship in Spirit and in truth. Therefore we want to establish both family worship and the family of God worship as a priority in our life.

Here is one more statement under perspective. Gathered worship with the family of God is the key to the Christian life or lifestyle worship. One of the things I look forward to on the Lord's Day worship is the recalibration in my life. Every Monday through Saturday I am being bombarded with thousands of pieces of communications and advertisements that keep telling me that life is all about me. The Lord's Day in general, morning and evening worship, is telling me and recalibrating me that what I've been hearing from the world these past six days is a message of death. If it's all about me then it will be all about despair. The Christian life is all about Me and that is where you will find your greatest joy. True worship is worship that is all about God. I'm not saying we don't make adjustments in the proper decorum of worship but I'm saying that I don't step into the worship to get a blessing. I step into worship to bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me will bless His holy Name. When I do that, that will instruct me as I leave here how I live my lifestyle worship because it's not about me, it's about Him.

Gathered worship sets the thermostat for the Christian life. So, gathered worship is crucial. The Lord's Day gathered worship accompanied by my family's gathered worship is the key to the Christian life because it refocuses us, instructs us and reminds us in life. It goes along with the fact that the assaults in our public worship drives us back to the private worship to be refreshed in the Lord and the same thing is true in gathered worship. As I assemble with God's people in gathered worship it blesses my life personally, in my family and in my relationships. Again, my personal worship and family worship feeds my gathered worship.

I have a theory in my life and it's purely anecdotal on my part. I have noticed as a pastor for years the sense and the tenor of Lord's Day morning worship and the sense and the tenor of Lord's Day evening worship. There seems to be such an ambiance in evening worship that is so inviting, fulfilling and encouraging. There seems to be no rushing around when you come you just kind of hang around and fellowship. My theory is that Sunday morning got us in a place where we could enjoy to the praise of God Sunday evening. What would happen if Saturday night family worship got me to the place where I was ready for Sunday morning? Sunday night would just be icing on the cake.

You don't just automatically walk out of doing battle in this world and you don't just automatically step into a worship service where everything is ready to go when service starts. There is preparation for battle. There is preparation for worship. What would happen if I prepared for worship before I got to the worship service? I'm convinced that gathered worship feeds lifestyle worship and our own families feed each other in terms of how worship is carried before God. So what are some blessings when we acknowledge the priority of not only gathered worship with God's family but gathered worship with my own family on a regular basis? Here are seven blessings of this.

First of all it gives us the opportunity to be faithful to our covenant vows of baptism to your children. It gives you an opportunity of principled faithfulness to your covenant vows. The first vow is that your child is in need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit. The second vow is that I have a promise from God because Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. The third vow is that I commit my child in the power of the Holy Spirit with utter dependence upon His grace to set an example for my children to teach my children the Word of God and to raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord by bringing them into the means of grace in the church and bringing the means of grace from the church into my home. In other words, I not only go to church with my family but I bring the church into my home for my family. This is something that I need to be intentionally doing. Family worship is one, not the only, of the key elements for parents to fulfill their responsibilities to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The second blessing is family worship, I believe, is one of the greatest instruments of covenantal evangelism and discipleship. In family worship you are evangelizing your child and when your child has come to Christ you will disciple them. I have one child that was converted in the bath tub at age 4, another child who wasn't converted until later on in her life and then another child who was converted as he began to develop in his teenage years. I don't ever know when the Lord is going to bring them to Himself but I am convinced it was in the faithfulness of gathered worship with God's people and in the faithfulness of family worship as faltering and inadequate as it was that God used it to evangelize and disciple our children.

The third blessing is family worship gives you an opportunity to eradicate the world life views that are being impinged upon your children and construct a Biblical world and life view on a regular basis with them. I know you probably don't believe it but your child is listening to you. The proof will come later when they quote back to you things that you have told them, but they are listening to you. In those moments you can thoughtfully and carefully eradicate and show the inadequacies of the world and life views of this world as well as construct a God-centered world and life view.

A fourth blessing is that you in family worship are impacting future generations. I now watch my children having family worship with their children not only like we did, but better than we did. In fact, you impact not only your generation but coming generations because the very ones that you are bringing into the worship of God in your home as you prioritize the worship of God with clarity to your children in its importance, is that which is setting the tone for them that they then use in future generations.

The fifth blessing is that family worship allows a husband and wife to contribute to their marital support of each other and enjoyment of each other. I do believe fathers should lead the way but I don't think mothers are silent. The Bible says about a wife and mother in Proverbs 31: 26, [26] *She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.* This refers to her teaching her children. So, it is a father and mother endeavor. Certainly the father is

giving some leadership here but the mother is engaged as well. There many times that when I had to go on a trip my wife Cindy would lead the family devotion/worship time and so just because I wasn't there didn't mean we were going to stop that family time. The husband and wife are working together on this as a father and mother in raising the children and it becomes the most important project of your life. Bringing family worship to your children is more important than getting together to decide what house you will buy next. You invest in the lives of your children together and it brings marital support and enjoyment in each other's lives.

The sixth blessing is that your family worship will enhance your personal worship and your gathered worship with God's people. I'll explain more on this in a moment as to how this can be done but first the seventh blessing is as you enjoy your personal growth that is effected by family worship as you have your marital strengthening, you begin to develop parental synergy. As a husband and a wife work together as a mother and father it greatly affects your unity and parental engagement in raising your children in the nurture and admonition of your children. It's amazing how God does this in your life and you find it overlapping and supporting your corporate worship.

Family worship does not replace corporate worship. It supports it. It enhances it and overlaps it. It doesn't replace Lord's Day gathered worship. Don't let family worship become an insidious trap of family or children idolatry. God didn't give us the family to worship it. God gave us the family to worship Him. I know your concern for your children and I'm appealing for the concern for your children but you don't have family worship for the idolatry of your children. You have family worship so that they may know how to worship the Lord. It's not all about you, it's about the Lord. Family worship is a means not an end. Family worship is also not the opportunity to scold your children when you missed doing it earlier that day. You'll kill family worship in a heartbeat on that one. While I love ingenuity in family worship it's also not family craft time either.

So what is it that we focus upon at worship? Here are seven principles for this. The first one is that family worship is like Lord's Day gathered worship. It's all about God because it is about being all about His Word. It is the Word of God that lifts up the God of the Word. So, family worship is about the Word of God. In gathered worship we worship God as He has revealed Himself in the Word of God so we read it, sing it, quote it, confess it, pray it and preach it that the Word of God is saturating gathered worship of the family of God's people. The same thing is true in your family worship. The Word of God should be heard, read, shared and memorized in family worship. In our family worship we would memorize the Apostle's Creed, we used the shorter catechism and use various things but be ready to get embarrassed at certain moments if you're not careful.

Family worship is like Lord's Day worship when we have visitors – the choice is to come to our family worship or Lord's Day worship or not and go sit somewhere else but we'll still have it even with visitors in our home. The visitors get a chance to listen in or they would get a chance to attend Lord's Day worship with us as well. Sometimes in our family worship when people were visiting the kids would perk up and let people know what they know so you have to be careful not to feed pride there. The Lord has a way of humbling us at that moment as well.

One time when my oldest daughter was very young and we had people visiting I said to her 'why don't you share the memory verse we've been learning in our family worship time' and I had forgotten that we had also been learning the Apostle's Creed. So my daughter then says 'Since we have been surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses let us also lay aside every entanglement and the sin that so easily tangles us and every cumbrance. Let us fix our eyes on

Jesus the Author and Perfector of our faith who for the joy set before Him endured the cross and despising its shame and sat down at the right hand of God for thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost...etc' So she flowed right from Hebrews 12:2 right into the Apostle's Creed.

My simple point is that the Word of God ought to saturate the time you are in family worship. Sing it. Pray it. Read it. Share the great stories of the Bible for there are adventures, romance, intrigue, riddles, allegories, poems, songs etc. There is so much you can teach from the Bible to your children. Memorize it. In particular when you sing it, sing Scripture songs like praise songs based on passages of Scripture. There is the Bible song 'Isn't He Wonderful' that says:

Isn't He Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful

Isn't Jesus, my Lord, wonderful!

Eyes have seen, ears have heard,

It's recorded in God's word.

Isn't Jesus, my Lord, wonderful!

The reason I point out this particular song is because when I was five years old my grandmother taught me this song and so I did it with my kids in our family worship time. But in my worst rebellion I never forgot this song.

Secondly, always make sure the Gospel is saturated. Go over what it means to be saved by grace and how you're delivered from two things – sin's guilt and sin's power. Because I have been forgiven from sin's guilt I am forgiven. Because I have been forgiven from sin's power I can kill sin. So let's go to work. Keep bringing that Gospel message to your children time and time again. So if it's Gospel saturated then in worship you want adoration and thanksgiving. Lift up God and you want supplication before God.

Thirdly, keep it simple, fourthly, keep it short and aim at the youngest one in the group where understanding is concerned. If you aim for the youngest one I promise you that everyone will get a blessing. If you aim at the top you will leave somebody out.

Fifthly, keep it linear and connected. I believe all of life is linear so you have to think successively. So, I believe that is fine for you to use worship material. We use the devotional Tabletalk, the shorter catechism, the larger catechism, the children's catechism, the Apostle's Creed etc. There are numerous things you can use continually in Monday through Friday worship. Keeping it connected means that whatever you are doing one day there is anticipation for the next day. Each day is building on the previous one. If all you have time to do is read one verse then praise the Lord but if when you can pick some instrument that will help you stay connected day by day and linear in thought so that everything is building from one to the other in their life. There are all kinds of wonderful materials that can be used for this.

So why did I say Monday through Friday? This is my personal pastoral recommendation. Save Saturday for the Lord's Day. Here at Briarwood if you get the weekly email you can use the sermon text on Saturday in family worship to prepare yourself and your family for the Lord's Day. It is what Mr. Henry used to call Sabbath Eve preparation. On the Eve of the Sabbath you are preparing your family for the praise of God on the Lord's Day and you are tying it together.

Number six, find a way for everybody to participate. In the Bible we are told of participate as people confess and sing to one another. Worship is participation so find a way for your family to participate.

Seventhly and finally, make sure the worship time is accessible, available and prioritized. This is what we do. This is a priority – family worship. Make it an accessible time, not a difficult time. Make it an available time. For years ours was at the evening meal. I wished I could have kept it at the evening meal much longer than we did because I wished I could have kept the sanctity of the evening meal much longer but there are other crusades I need to be on besides that one. So as our kids got older, involved in more extracurricular activities we moved it to 9:30 in the evening to our bed. That did get embarrassing at times for my youngest daughter thought anybody who was there ought to be a part of it and she didn't care if it was in her dad and mom's bedroom and we were dressed for bed. She would just bring them right on in but I can't tell you what a joy that was. Then when they had children we had to get a bigger bed because of the children and the grandchildren for at times they would still show up when we had our family worship time. We would still close our time in prayer as it was built into their lives.

My exhortation to you is that you would have your personal worship enhanced by your family worship and your personal worship would engage with your family worship. Then that your family worship would enliven and encourage your gathered worship with God's people as you begin to put it in your life. What if something happens and you can't do it? Missing family worship is not the unpardonable sin. I'm not telling you that to diminish everything I've just said but if something happens and it can't be done then just pick up on it the next night. Not only can a wife take over for her husband and a wife and a husband can do it together, but there will be times when the oldest child can do it by your appointment. It's a very practical suggestion but it has to be at your appointment. I can promise you the younger siblings do not want the older one to be leading in that family worship unless you say that they are going to do it but even that becomes part of discipleship in the lives of your children.

So as I said earlier if I was discipling you this is just something I would want to build in your life. Parents you have a great influence in the lives of your children for God has ordained it. Parents, other than gathered worship with God's people, there is nothing more important than family worship to gain a continual focus on the glory of God who made us, saved us and sustained us. Perhaps you don't have a family yet but the way family worship will become a part of your life if and when God grants you a family, is to make sure that your personal worship before the Lord is a daily part of your life even now. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You Father for the privilege to serve You together with these people who love You. Thank You Father for the opportunity to honor our fathers today but thank You Father more than anything for fathers who honor You and thank You Father that You allow us as fathers along with our wives – fathers and mothers – to raise our children in and for Christ and how we praise You for the precious moments of family worship, giving You praise in Jesus and thank You for the Timothys who will hear 'the things you learned from childhood.' We praise Your Name, Amen.

Power Point

A Perspective – Seven Blessings –Seven Principles