

Articles and Sermons :: Godliness, Worship And Prayer In Our Homes by Arthur W. Pink

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No matter how excellent the constitution and laws of a country may be, or what its material resources, they are insufficient and ineffectual, unless a sure foundation for social order and public virtue is laid in the healthy regulation and wise discipline of its families. The nation is but the aggregate of individuals comprising it; and unless there are good fathers and mothers, good sons and daughters, brothers and sisters â€" there will be no good citizens. It is because our home life has so sadly deteriorated, that social decay is now so far advanced, nor can it be arrested until parents once again properly discharge their responsibility. We have no hesitation in saying that the future welfare of our nation is more seriously menaced by the relaxation of family government and the breakdown of home life, than by any governmental incompetence or foreign hostility.

HOME! How much that one word used to convey! It is still one of the most precious in the English language unto some of us. Much more so when to all its natural attractions are added the hallowed associations which gather around a Christian home. Is not our favorite concept of heaven embodied in that blessed expression, "My Fatherâ€™s house"? (John 14:2). Because the Christian is not his own, but bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20), he is to aim at glorifying God in every relation of life. No matter what station he occupies, or wherever he is â€" he is to serve as a witness for Christ.

Godliness in the Home

Our home should be a sphere of most manifest devotedness unto Him. All its arrangements should bear the stamp of our heavenly calling. All its affairs should be so ordered that everyone entering it should feel, "God is here!"

The supreme aim of family life should be household piety, everything else being subordinated thereto. It is in the home our real characters are most manifested and best known. Out in the world, a certain measure of restraint is placed upon both our corruptions and our graces; but in the home, we are freer to act naturally, and it is there that our worst and best sides alike are exhibited the plainest.

As a close observer and one of wide experience said, "I can never form a correct judgment of a man from seeing or hearing him in a religious meeting. He may seem a very spiritual person there, and say very beautiful things â€" but let me go home with him, and there I learn the actual state of the case!" He may indeed pray like a saint in the church â€" but unless his home is governed according to the Word of God, and his own conduct be regulated by the Spirit of Christ â€" he fails to witness for Him in that most important and influential sphere. The reality and extent of "a work of grace" in the soul are most clearly revealed amid the petty trials of home life.

In the Scriptures, we find some of its most eminent characters subjected to that severe test. For example, the Lord gave as the reason for the intimate confidences He was about to make unto Abraham, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord..." (Gen. 18:19). Thus his home life was as pleasing unto God as was his public life.

Nor are the Scriptures less explicit in showing us the disastrous consequences which attend a believerâ€™s unfaithfulness in this relation. A notable case in point is the fearful ruin of Eliâ€™s family: "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 Sam. 3:13).

The state of a preacherâ€™s home is likewise made the test of his character: he is disqualified from the sacred office, unless he be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity," adding, "(for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)" (1 Tim. 3:4-5).

Is Your Home Devoted to Godâ€™s Glory?

What do visitors, especially those who spend a night under your roof, behold in your home? Do they see a household which is well-ordered, everything regulated according to Godâ€™s Word â€" or do they behold a scene of confusion and turmoil? Is there a noticeable absence of that carnal luxury and fleshly display which mark those whose affections are set upon things below? Is there little or nothing to distinguish your home from the worldlingâ€™s, or is everything in it aiming at the glory of God? Are the husband and wife conducting themselves as "being heirs together of the grace of life"? (

1 Pet. 3:7). Are the children brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4) and "in subjection with all gravity" (1 Tim. 3:4) or utterly spoiled, unruly, and a trial to those who have to endure their presence? Do visitors behold an example of parental piety, of beneficial discipline maintained, evidences on every side that their hearts are set upon something higher than the baubles of earth? Do they see a family that daily worships the Lord? If they do not, they will rightly suspect the genuineness of your Christian profession!

Examples of Godly Homes

It is not at all difficult to prove the obligation of domestic piety.

Consider further the example of Abraham, the father of the faithful and the friend of God. It was for his domestic piety that he received blessing from Jehovah Himself, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (Gen. 18:19). The patriarch is here commended for instructing his children and servants in the most important of all duties, "the way of the Lord" — the truth about His glorious person, His high claims upon us, His requirements from us.

Note well the words "he will command" them; that is, he would use the authority God had given him as a father and head of his house to enforce the duties of family godliness. Abraham also prayed with, as well as instructed his family — wherever he pitched his tent, there he "built an altar to the Lord" (Gen. 12:7; 13:4). Now my readers, we may ask ourselves, "Are we Abraham's seed if we do not the works of Abraham and neglect the weighty duty of family worship?" (Gal. 3:29; John 8:39).

The examples of other holy men are similar to that of Abraham's. Consider the pious determination of Joshua who declared to Israel, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). Neither the exalted station which he held, nor the pressing public duties which developed upon him, were allowed to crowd out his attention to the spiritual well-being of his family. Again, when David brought back the ark of God to Jerusalem with joy and thanksgiving after discharging his public duties, he "returned to bless his household" (2 Sam. 6:20). In addition to these eminent examples, we may cite the case of Job (1:5). Limiting ourselves to only one in the New Testament, we think of the history of Timothy, who was reared in a godly home. Paul called to remembrance the "sincere faith" which was in him, and added, "which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice" (2 Tim. 1:5). Is there any wonder then that the apostle could say "from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures"! (2 Tim. 3:15).

Daily Family Devotions

It is not enough that we pray as private individuals in our closets; we are required to honor God in our families as well. Each day, the whole household should be gathered together to bow before the Lord — to confess their sins, to give thanks for God's mercies, to seek His help and blessing. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with this duty: all other domestic arrangements are to bend to it. The head of the house is the one to lead the devotions — but if he is absent, or seriously ill, or an unbeliever, then the wife should take his place. Under no circumstances should family worship be omitted. If we would enjoy the blessing of God upon our family — then let its members gather together daily for praise and prayer. "Them that honor Me I will honor" (1 Sam. 2:30) is His promise.

An old writer well said, "A family without prayer is like a house without a roof, open and exposed to all storms." All our domestic comforts and temporal mercies, issue from the loving-kindness of the Lord. The best we can do in return is to gratefully acknowledge together His goodness to us as a family. Excuses against the discharge of this sacred duty are idle and worthless. Of what avail will it be when we render an account to God for the stewardship of our families — to say that we had no time available, working hard from morn until eve? The more pressing are our temporal duties — the greater our need of seeking spiritual support. Nor may any Christian plead that he is not qualified for such a work — gifts and talents are developed by use — and not by neglect.

Family worship should be conducted reverently, earnestly and simply. It is then that the little ones will receive their first impressions and form their initial conceptions of the Lord God. Great care needs to be taken lest a false idea be given them of the Divine Character, and for this, the balance must be preserved between dwelling upon His transcendency and immanency, His holiness and His mercy, His power and His tenderness, His justice and His grace. Worship should begin with a few words of prayer invoking God's presence and blessing. A short passage from His Word should follow, with brief comments thereon. Two or three verses of a psalm or hymn may be sung. Close with a prayer of committal into the hands of God. Though we may not be able to pray eloquently, we should pray earnestly. Beware of wearying the young ones.

The Blessings of Family Worship

The advantages and blessings of family worship are incalculable.

First, family worship will prevent much sin. It awes the soul, conveys a sense of God's majesty and authority, sets solemn truths before the mind, and brings down blessings from God on the home. Personal piety in the home is a most influential means, under God, of conveying piety to the little ones. Children are largely creatures of imitation, loving to copy what they see in others.

"For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psa. 78:5-7).

How much of the dreadful moral and spiritual conditions of the masses today may be traced back to the neglect of their fathers in his duty? How can those who neglect the worship of God in their families look for peace and comfort therein? Daily prayer in the home is a blessed means of grace for allaying those unhappy passions to which our common nature is subject.

Finally, family prayer gains for us the presence and blessing of the Lord. There is a promise of His presence which is peculiarly applicable to this duty, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there among them" (Matt. 18:20). Many have found in family worship that help and communion with God which they sought for with less effect in private prayer.

Arranged from "Christian Homes" and "Family Worship" by Arthur W. Pink.

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