

# FAMILY W

Westminster Confession of Faith – that most sublime historical document of biblical doctrine (which is also our church’s doctrinal creed) – states in section 6 of chapter 21 (concerning “Religious Worship, and the Sabbath Day”) that:

“... God is to be worshipped everywhere, in spirit and truth, as, in private families daily, and in secret, each one by himself; so, more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly or wilfully to be neglected, or forsaken, when God, by His Word or providence, calls thereunto.”

Truly, the Reformed churches have always taught that family worship is required by God in His Word. (The Church of Scotland even publishes a directory on family worship.) In fact, the Puritans saw family worship so foundational that they would bar a man from communion if he failed to lead his family in worship. Unfortunately, many in our churches do not seem to appreciate this blessed biblical practice; they reject the exhortations on family worship in Christian homes as legalism. Some modern-day so-called Christian articles even say “Family worship isn’t required by the Bible”!

However, anyone who carefully reads the Scriptures knows that God requires the heads of the families to lead their households in prayers, instruction of His Word and worship of Him. God’s Word also records the perils of families who do not seek the Lord diligently. Dear Christian readers, my prayer to God is that every Christian family in the church will enthusiastically respond to the divine call to maintain family worship in their home.

## **Biblical Religion Has Its Beginning in Families**

The Puritan Thomas Manton had said, “Religion was first hatched in families.” From Adam to Moses, true worship of God was largely a family affair, where the Patriarchs led their households in the worship of God through prayers, instruction of His Word and offering of sacrifices for the families. It was only from the time of Moses onwards (see the book of Exodus) that we begin to see gatherings of organised public worship. This fact is corroborated by Scriptural records of worshipful activities of Noah’s family (cf. Genesis 6:18; 7:1; 8:18-20; Hebrews 11:7), Abraham’s family (cf. Genesis 18:19), Isaac’s family (cf. Genesis 25:21), Jacob’s family (cf. Genesis 35:2-3), Job’s family

# WORSHIP

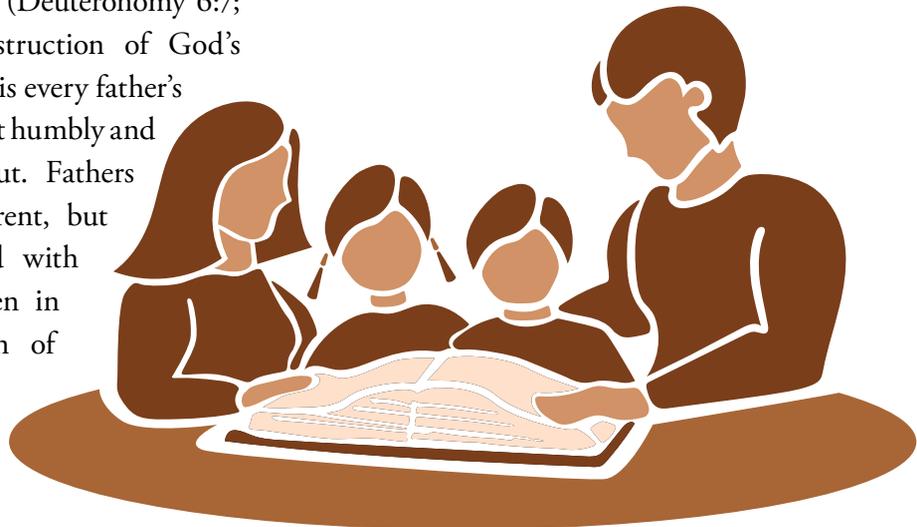
(cf. Job 1:5), among others. Furthermore, the Israelites, while in Egypt, were told to worship the Lord in their houses during the Passover (Exodus 12:21-28). Indeed, as Thomas Manton noted, “The families of the Patriarchs were all the churches God had in the world for the time.”

Notwithstanding the institution of public worship in Moses’ time, God nonetheless instructed the parents, through Moses, that they should be diligent to maintain daily teaching of His written Word in their homes, so that their children may grow up to be worshippers of God and doers of His commandments. “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:7; cf. 11:19). Daily instruction of God’s Word to the children is every father’s responsibility; he must humbly and faithfully carry it out. Fathers must not be indifferent, but be deeply concerned with guiding their children in the divine revelation of God’s truths. This responsibility ought to be duly impressed

upon them. Daily biblical instruction of the young is God’s express command, and must be carried out with joy and commitment. Truly, God’s Word is the best inheritance that we can give to our children daily. It shall fill their hearts with sanctifying truth, wisdom and promises, that they may live a victorious Christian life in the midst of a wicked generation.

## Biblical Religion is the Foundation of Godly Families

Scripture reminds us that without God’s help, we cannot build our home – “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Psalm 127:1). Family worship is invaluable in that it is the foundation of



a family's godliness and unity, as well as that of child-rearing. How family worship thrives or fails to thrive will have a commensurate bearing on how the family will flourish spiritually. As such, family worship is the backbone of a community, even our church (cf. Psalm 128)!

Needless to say, when respective Christian families in the church are worshipping God daily and growing in the knowledge of His sanctifying Word, the church will have enormous moral and spiritual strength in the work of the Lord. On the contrary, if the families in the church are without daily prayer and spiritual nurture, the church will be utterly weak and dying. Oh, how wonderful it is that every Christian home by itself is a church of God, where parents and children worship the Lord!

Indeed, the head of the family leading his household in covenant faithfulness to God is perhaps the most significant way that God uses as a means of saving grace for many of the children in the church. However, if the father is absent (either because he is not a believer or he is dead), then let the mother lead her young children in the singing of hymns, reading of the Scriptures and prayer. Oh, how we need to guide our children to look at our Saviour daily, that their hearts be filled with the joy, peace and assurance of His forgiveness and redemption! Paul's words to young Timothy bear witness to the importance of the practice of family religion – “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation

through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

## **Biblical Religion Paves the Way for Godly Leadership**

Moreover, the biblical counsel is that believing, worshipping and faithful households are necessary prerequisites for sound church leadership. For sound spiritual leadership, the Bible says we must have men who rule their house well. In 1 Timothy 3:5, Paul asks, “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” If the men in the church are not able to lead their own families in the worship of God, how could they lead a bigger family, even the church, to be true worshippers of God?

Therefore, it behoves Christian men to lead their families with a firm, fatherly hand and a gentle, penitent heart in the daily worship of God. Christian husbands and fathers, talk reverentially, authoritatively and lovingly with your family in your guiding of them to worship God.

As a matter of testimony, for more than two decades, I can unequivocally affirm that family worship has been the most important thing I do daily in my family. It is the highlight of my day. God is worthy to receive worship of my family every day, for He is our salvation and the source of all our blessings. Weak and frail as we are, we cannot do anything to please Him without seeking His all-sufficient grace, for He is our daily refuge and strength. Amen.



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