

LESSON #8 – A CHRISTIAN'S CALL TO FAMILY PRAYER

A CHRISTIAN'S CALL – Contrary to common definition, a *family* is more than a collection of human beings who share similar genetic material. A family is more than the sum of its parts. It is a living, shaping unit that the Holy Spirit uses to teach the most important lessons in life. A Christian family ought to teach who we are, how we are to act, what is significant, and a faithful prayer life.

THE PRAYER – Dear Lord, this day we give thanks for all that You have done for us. For many of us that means having had a Christian mother and father who taught us, very early in life, to pray. We ask that we, who are entrusted with sharing the wonders of Your love and grace, may share it willingly with those who are to come after us. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

ILLUSTRATION - Years ago, a good friend went out for breakfast. His attitude, like the morning, was dismal and depressing. Although several others were in the diner, everybody kept to themselves. In one small booth by the window, was a young mother with her little girl. They were getting ready to eat when the girl broke the sad silence with a deafening whisper, "Momma, why don't we say our prayers here?" The waitress who had just served them, turned around and said, "Honey, we do pray here. Will you say the words for us?" Then the waitress gave everybody a look and mouthed the words, "Bow your heads." One by one, the customers did. The little girl began, "God is great, God is good, let us thank him for our food. Amen." When she was done, the atmosphere and the people changed - for the better. The waitress said, "We should do that every morning."

That's a cute story about a little girl teaching adults. But God says it's supposed to be the other way. Adults are to teach children about Him, and how to pray. Satan, of course, would have it different:

SATAN'S SUMMONS – For years family-life specialists have conducted surveys across America. In a survey of hundreds of children, they have found the three things fathers say most to their kids. The expression, "I'm too tired" took first place. In second place was, "We don't have enough money." And, not unexpectedly, "Keep quiet" was third. In the list there is not a single bit of spiritual encouragement. After the earliest of years, the only time many parents encourage their children to pray is for some very special events like:

Bedtime

Before (not after) dinner

When someone in the family is sick / dying

When they want something.

All too often certain types of prayers are missing.

Prayers of a personal nature or that share feelings

Prayers of confession/repentance

Prayers of thanksgiving

THOUGHT: We take seriously the expectations of God who expects a great deal from families. He wants no spiritual orphans.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH 1 – Take a look at these passages to see what went wrong

TEXT	QUESTION	ANSWER
1 Samuel 2: 22-25	Who messed up?	The priest Eli let his sons do whatever they wanted.
	What would a Christian father have done?	He should have corrected them.
Genesis 37: 3-4	Who messed up?	Jacob by loving Joseph most.
	What did it lead to?	Jealousy.
	What would a Christian father have done?	Treated all equally.
1 Kings 1: 6	Who messed up?	David, by never disciplining his son.
	What should he have done?	Taught him right from wrong.

For whatever reason, these men, who had the privilege of knowing the Lord; who should have been spiritual leaders in their households, neglected to set a religious example for their sons.

**JEREMIAH 33:3 "CALL TO ME" GROUP BIBLE STUDIES – LEADER'S STUDY -
LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES**

FIRST APPLICATION: It wasn't so many years ago that businessmen in Japan found themselves too busy to visit their parents. It didn't take long for a business to offer a solution. For \$1,130 a day, the Japan Efficiency Headquarters company was willing to send actors to visit the neglected parents and provide "family" time. The actors were trained in psychology to ensure a realistic family visit. I can't imagine that this costly service would make parents feel better.

I'm sure surrogate prayer-parents wouldn't work for children. Not even the most caring Pastors and the most compassionate parochial school teachers can take the place of a praying parent. If children are to learn to call on the Lord; if prayer is to be a regular part of the lives of the young ones, it will because it is a regular part of their parents' lives.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH 2 - CHRIST'S CALL - Let's take a look at these passages and see what the Lord says to His people about prayer and its importance in the family:

TEXT	WHO WAS THE PRAYING PARENT?	HOW DID THE PRAYER END UP?
1 Samuel 1: 22, 27-28	Hannah	Samuel was given to the Lord for his life.
1 Chronicles 22: 6, 11-13	David	Showed high hopes for Solomon's reign.
2 Timothy 1:1, 1:5, 3:15	Eunice	Timothy ended up a leader in the early church.

Look at these passages which follow and respond to question:

PASSAGE	WHAT SHOULD PARENTS TEACH THEIR CHILDREN?
Exodus 12: 26-27	What God has done...and that they should bow down and worship Him.
Deut 11: 18-21	At all times impress upon your children what God has done.
Isaiah 38: 19	Fathers should tell their children about God's faithfulness so they learn to praise Him.
Ephesians 6: 4	Fathers should bring their children up in God's admonition.

THOUGHT & ILLUSTRATION - When I was visiting a family in Montana, I stayed at a house where they had a "five minute rule." That meant the four children had to be ready five minutes before they were to go anywhere. Those five minutes were spent wherever Mother happened to be at the time. Sometimes it was the kitchen, other times the living room or out on the porch. Before they headed out, the Mother named each child and asked a blessing on each of the children. When the prayer was finished, there was a kiss for each, and off everyone went.

What a wonderful example those children have in a parent who teaches with actions and examples rather than just words. On a one to ten scale rate how you think most mothers and fathers do in educating their children:

EXAMPLE	RATING:	ALWAYS	VERY OFTEN	OFTEN	SELDOM	NEVER
Teach a child how to hold a baseball bat.		ALWAYS	VERY OFTEN	OFTEN	SELDOM	NEVER
Talk about financial giving to the church.		ALWAYS	VERY OFTEN	OFTEN	SELDOM	NEVER
Spend time teaching how to ride a bicycle.		ALWAYS	VERY OFTEN	OFTEN	SELDOM	NEVER
Having a regular personal prayer time with a child.		ALWAYS	VERY OFTEN	OFTEN	SELDOM	NEVER
Teach looking both ways before crossing a street.		ALWAYS	VERY OFTEN	OFTEN	SELDOM	NEVER
Say other prayers other than, "Come Lord Jesus...."		ALWAYS	VERY OFTEN	OFTEN	SELDOM	NEVER

We dare not, as spiritual leaders within our homes, take care of the trivial and ignore teaching the fundamentals of prayer to the Lord.

THE WAY OF PRAYER – Dear Lord, be with us and our families. Help us teach our children that they can, without hesitation come to You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.