

Dear Friend,

I've been thinking about this past Sunday's children's sermon. Maybe it would be more accurate to say that I've been trying to avoid thinking about this past Sunday's children's sermon. We considered this question and answer from the Westminster Shorter Catechism: What does the third commandment forbid? (As a reminder, the third commandment is: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.") The answer to the question is: The third commandment forbids our treating as unholy or abusing anything God uses to make himself known.

The reason that I have been trying to avoid thinking about this commandment is because this summer I have been treating as unholy one of the ways God has given to make himself known. I have not conducted Family Worship in my house since the beginning of the summer. I have confessed my sin to God and have rejoiced that Christ bore God's wrath against me for this sin. I am asking him for the strengthening power of his Spirit that I might love him and love my family by working to maintain the daily worship of God in my home.

In order to strengthen my faith and help me to follow Christ as a Christian husband and father, I thought it would be helpful for me to review why I should maintain the worship of God in my home. On the off chance that you may be struggling to treat Family Worship or some other thing that God uses to make himself known as holy, I thought I would share with you what I am saying to myself about Family Worship. (Note to singles and couples without children in their home: I am convinced that the reasons for maintaining Family Worship equally apply to the necessity of maintaining private and couple worship of God as well.)

While the Bible does not command a particular form for family worship it does command me as a father to daily instruct my children in the ways of God. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 says, "These commands that I am giving you today are to be upon your heart. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." In addition, the apostle Paul says, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

Throughout the centuries the Christian church has taught its parents that a way to fulfill this duty to our children is to daily (for hundreds of years, it was twice a day) gather our family together to read the Scriptures, to sing praise and to pray together. Here are some of the benefits of this daily "Family Worship". I'm sure you can come up with more. I share these to remind myself and perhaps you of why doing this is a clear expression of my love for God and for my family.

- It pleases God: "The prayers of the upright are his delight" Prov. 15:8
- Each individual in the family is reminded of his or her need of God.
- Children learn to pay attention and worship at home and so more readily pay attention and worship in church.

- God's help is sought for the needs of the family and his hand of provision is seen in answer to those prayers.
- Promotes godly living and godly conversation at other times of the day as each day we are reminded that life is about God.
- Encourages parents to seek God privately as they must lead their children publicly.
- Children and visitors who are not spiritually attentive are brought into a place where the word of God and the Spirit of God are present to work on their hearts.
- Builds a strong church because spiritually strong families make strong churches.
- Promotes domestic harmony and mutual love by daily rejoicing in the finished work of Christ for sinners.
- Builds habits of devotion in children that they will take with them personally and into their family.
- Strengthens the family to face in faith the various troubles that come with living in this world.
- It is the primary means that God uses in passing on faith to children. (Psalm 78:1-7)

Please pray for me to be a faithful servant of Christ to my family and I will pray the same for you.

Trusting God for grace to obey,

P.S. We will be conducting a Faith Training Seminar on Saturday, October 22nd. This daylong seminar seeks to set forth our vision for parents passing on their faith to their children and for our church to help children become faith-filled adults by promoting intergenerational relationships, fellowship and service.