

(Lecture Notes)

**The Need of the Hour**

Every believing parent should endeavor to pass the Christian faith to each of his or her children. The result will be the children's eternal salvation, as well as a life of knowing and serving the Lord.

This God-given responsibility is emphasized repeatedly through Scripture. From Moses' command about God's laws, "Impress them on your children" (Deuteronomy 6:7), to Paul's admonition to "bring [children] up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4), the Bible is clear on this subject.

However, some Christian parents have not encouraged this teaching. They reacted like one new father who insisted that any religious training of children was infringing on their liberty to express themselves and choose their own way. But they did not realize that the devil does not wait around for he is all too happy to influence our children away from the faith.

*Raising children to develop a sincere and personal faith in Jesus Christ is the need of the hour.*

**Two Points about Instilling Faith**

- 1) Even if parents do everything right, some children will still deliberately rebel. But it is our job to do all we can to encourage their faith, trusting the Lord for the outcome.
- 2) Though we may raise our children in a way to inspire their faith, there comes a time when they must make this faith their own.

**What is Adoration?**

Adoration is an intimate form of worship. It is not about singing, going to church or performing any outward rituals. It is about forming and nurturing an *internal relationship with God*.

Thomas a' Kempis in his book, *The Imitation of Christ*, wrote: "If we let our progress in religious life depend on the observance of externals alone, our dedication will quickly come to an end."

Individual adoration, on the other hand, lasts because it is purely internal. It is sitting alone in God's presence adoring Him. It is the difference between doing *something* and knowing *someone*.

*Worship is the individual adoration of God!*

## **The Importance of Worship in the Family**

Billy Graham, one of the greatest evangelists of our time said, "The only way to provide the right home for our children is to put the Lord above them, and fully instruct them in the ways of the Lord."

Author and teacher Charles Swindoll tells us: "Whatever may be said about the home, it is the bottom line of life, the anvil upon which attitudes and convictions are hammered out. It is the place where life's bills come due, the single most influential force in our earthly existence...It is here life makes up its mind."

## **But We Worship God Every Sabbath, Right?**

Most teaching about worship divides the topic into two parts: corporate worship and individual worship. Both are found in Scripture and both are strongly encouraged. Yet today there is so much emphasis on corporate worship that many believers never consider worshipping God privately.

If our children hear us *talk* about our wonderful, magnificent God but note that we worship Him only once a week, even the youngest children figure out that our actions belie our words. They conclude: "Why should I bother worshipping this God so much, when my parents seldom do so?"

But we can change this. Parents can begin today on an adventure in worshipping that will lead you and your family closer to the Lord. You can decide this moment to make worship a higher priority in your life. Your children will notice the difference and it will inspire them to follow in your footsteps.

What should we do as we worship God every day? Two areas are important for every believer:

### **1) Worship in Your Daily Quiet Time –**

A "quiet time" is a regular part of the day in which the individual draws away from other duties and other people in order to spend time alone with God. It can be in the morning or any other time. It will consist of praying, reading, praising and journaling.

## 2) Worship as a Lifestyle

Worshiping God throughout the day can include:

- Speak praise to God
- Sing songs to the Lord
- Give quiet adoration
- Meditate on the Word
- Pray to God
- Wait on the Lord – sitting quietly after prayer to see if God desires to direct you in any way.

The reason that the Lord desires our worship is because *He desires a closer relationship with His children.*

### **PRINCIPLE 1: MODELING A LIFESTYLE OF WORSHIP BEFORE OUR CHILDREN**

In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul asks of us, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” Whether we like it or not, our children are going to imitate us. A wise Christian father told me once, “I’m afraid your son is going to imitate you whether you imitate Christ or not! You’re already a model to him—you just have to decide whether you are going to be a good one or a bad one!”

#### The Modeling Principle

“We cannot expect our children to be any more dedicated to Christ than we are ourselves.”

This concept is true of all “models” or “molds.” When someone pours liquid metal or plastic into a mold, the form that emerges cannot be better (it may be worse) than the mold itself. When you place a piece of paper onto the glass of a photocopier, you do not expect the copy to be better (it may be worse) than the original.

Certainly, many children become more dedicated to Christ than their parents, but this principle asserts, that no parent *can expect* his or her children to be so when he or she is not willing to do so.

Yes, it’s outrageous for parents to insist that their children memorize Scriptures when they would never do so. Should we tell our children to witness to their friends at school, if we are unwilling to witness to our colleagues at work?

English poet John Donne said it this way: “Of all commentaries of the scriptures, *good examples* are the best and the liveliest.”

## Understanding Different Types of Authority

A Christian household cannot run properly without authority on the parents' side and obedience on the children's part. There are 3 types of authority:

1. **Authority of Position** – Children are to obey their parents because they are responsible for them. Whether they are good parents or poor ones is not the question. Children must obey them in that position.
2. **Authority of Experience** – Parents are adults with many more experiences and far more knowledge than a little child. The authority of a knowledgeable teacher carries more weight. But when the child is older and has more knowledge, it is important that parents do not use the authority of position to insist upon submission to religious things. The Christian child may obey respectfully, but it does not inspire loyalty and genuine belief.
3. **Authority of Recognition** – When a person possesses authority of recognition, he or she embodies confidence and moral strength. He has knowledge, experience and successes and is recognized as an expert in his field, therefore, emulated by all who watch him. Eg. Football coach, renown musician.

This is the authority needed to parent properly and inspire our children to follow us in serving the Lord.

## Winning an Argument versus Winning Your Kids' Respect

Winning your children's long-term respect is far more important than winning a short-term argument. It may be easier to demand teenagers' submission, and sometimes you simply have to. But it is better to cultivate their respect by modeling the Christian life. In this way, we tend to *inspire* obedience rather than simply demand it.

Why is it so important? Because earning long-term respect from your children—especially teenage children—will enable them to respect your belief system as well.

## What Then Are We to Model to Our Children?

There are two basic categories:

- 1) **Virtuous actions and attitudes** – loving your spouse, showing compassion, humility and patience, curbing your anger, encouraging those

around you, avoiding hurtful speech, using self-control. These traits are not specifically Christian and are also found in the teachings of many other societies.

- 2) **Foundational Christian Actions** – reading and studying the Bible, praying to God, worshiping Jesus Christ.

### What Do We Model?

- 1) **Talk about worship** – show our children that worship is a natural part of the Christian life. Refer to it often in daily conversation. At dinner table a parent might comment something like, “I was taking a moment to worship God at lunch, when the most interesting Scripture came to mind.”
- 2) **Speak about praise** – share praises to the Lord for the good things He has done for you. Have children share something they can praise God for at school. Offering praises helps us look at how God has led and guided us each day and it steers us away from concentrating on criticism instead.
- 3) **Model learning** – We should live out the truth of Proverbs 9:9: “Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still, teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.”

If our children see that we are actively involved in the joy of lifetime learning, then they will catch the same magnificent passion. If your child offers some information he has perceived, never belittle it with your superior knowledge or experience. Instead, say, “That’s marvelous! What a fascinating thought!” You will have just planted a desire to search out the truths of God’s Word.

One of my favorite quotes is by the writer Harvey Ullman: “Anyone who stops learning is old whether it happens at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps on learning not only remains young but also becomes constantly more valuable.”

- 4) **Model the characteristics of God** – Modeling God’s nature is ultimately what parenting is all about. Consider modeling:
  - *Justice* – parents must create a home life in which justice reigns, where the children know that doing good will be rewarded and that doing wrong will be punished. Parents must demonstrate the quality of justice.

- *Unconditional love* – it's important that parents should show unconditional love to their children or else they may grow up believing that they must "perform" to deserve love from the Lord.
- *Forgiveness*

## PRINCIPLE 2: KNOWING YOUR CHILDREN

"Be sure you know the condition of your flocks; give careful attention to your herds."

Proverbs 27:23

Very few of us live on a farm these days, so the above verse may not seem to have much relevance. Yet, for all of us who have children in our care, the principle behind this verse is of supreme importance.

How well do we really know our children, each one of them? The importance of knowing all we can about "how our children tick" (why they act and speak as they do) becomes even more essential as we seek to encourage their relationship to God through worship.

- 1) **Know that every child is unique** – heredity and environment do play a great part in how children of the same two parents can turn out very differently.
- 2) **Know your children's temperaments** – every child is different. Do you really know your children's temperaments? Temperaments might be defined as the "inner side" of an outward personality. Is your child boisterous or exacting or laid back or quiet?

Often parents will know what their children like and dislike, but they have no idea *why*. It is good to ask why so that it helps you understand your child better in his thinking.

- 3) **Know how to show equal respect for every child** – It is important to show equal respect for our children even though they have different personalities. Avoid the formidable snare of favoritism. Remember the story of Jacob and Esau? All that the parents succeeded in doing was to make enemies out of their two sons.

Please note that by *respect* we do not mean letting children do whatever they want! They must be taught obedience to God's law. But being different does not deserve less respect from parents. If children see that their parents respect each one of them, they too, will learn to respect each other, and later transfer this respect to others.

- 4) Know how your children feel** – children do have struggles and they do feel depressed, discouraged, fearful, etc. Knowing how they feel helps parents to bring them the love and encouragement they need. Physical things could be given to them by others, but being there to share and encourage them cannot be substituted.

This means parents must be open before our children too. In order to truly know our children, they must truly know *us*. So when you ask your children how their days went at school, be prepared to share how *your* day went as well.

Psychologists agree that the way children feel about their parents has a profound impact on the way they feel about God. We do not have to be perfect, but we should realize that *the attitude* our children construct toward us will usually transfer to their long-term attitude toward God.

- 5) Know how your children think about God** -- Do you know how your children think about God? About heaven? Do they ever think about such matters? Can you, indeed, *should* you encourage such thoughts?

Yes, we should and we must encourage such thoughts in our children. How? We must demonstrate frequently that we regularly entertain thoughts of the Lord and not just thoughts of the office or the housework.

### **PRINCIPLE 3: PRACTICE PRINCIPLES THAT ENCOURAGE WORSHIP**

There are 9 parenting principles that are directly connected to teaching worship. Teaching your children to worship is not a short-term project. It involves years of practices that will lead them into a permanent state of adoration for their Savior.

- 1) Express gratitude for your children** – adults typically relate to God in the way they learned as children to relate to their parents. Perhaps the most basic example has to do with the conception of our children. Are we happy or unhappy that our children are born? Do they see this in our speech and actions? Do we consistently demonstrate the supreme gratitude we feel about having them in our family?

It's important to convince our children that we were delighted at their arrival. They need to hear this, to know that they were (and are and always will be) *wanted*. "We were so excited when you were born" and "The best gift God has ever given me was you children."

It is difficult to worship God if you are unsure of His love. We need to emphasize the biblical truth that God loves them unconditionally, and we as parents also love them unconditionally.

- 2) Be humble and ask for forgiveness** – If you had a bad day at work and when you got home, you took it out on your children, exploding in anger and frustration. Now what? It's important that sooner or later, the parent needs to say something like this to the family: "I owe you all an apology. I'm deeply sorry I exploded at the dinner table. I was wrong to do so and I ask for your forgiveness."

So what has apologizing to do with teach worship? When a parent sincerely apologizes and asks forgiveness, he or she demonstrates to the child that even parents are not above the law. We show that there is a higher authority and we "also have a Master in heaven" (Colossians 4:1).

Our public submission to that Master and His law is yet another proof that we consider Him worthy of our worship. Such humbling can be a tremendous encouragement for children to worship this Master who is above all worldly authority—even parents.

- 3) Be sure that dad (not just mom) leads spiritually** – when a father allows his wife to be the prominent spiritual force in the family, it can have formidable long-term effects on the children.
- For the sons, it proclaims that Christianity is really for females; don't take it seriously.
  - For daughters, it damages the important portrait of the father heart of God, which may later produce insecurities about God's love for them.
  - It demonstrates a lack of oneness that should emanate from the household's leadership.
  - When both parents take leadership spiritually, it demonstrates that they are spiritually in one accord

Have regular family devotions:

- *Time* – each family decides on the best time, but the keyword is *consistency*.  
*"The secret of success is consistency of purpose."* – Benjamin Disraeli
- *Place* – choose a place where there is minimum distractions.
- *Duration* – generally 10-15 minutes.
- *Positive Attitude* – *"Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."* -- Ralph Waldo Emerson
- *Openness* – answer children's questions.
- *Variety* – use drama, quizzes, etc.
- *"Serious Fun."*

- 4) Learn to handle disagreement** – no two people will agree on everything, but it is the manner in which they resolve their differences can be a beautiful teaching to the children. The aspect of this subject that pertains the most to the teaching of worshipful children is threefold:
- *Self-control* – when disagreement erupts in public, the first duty of a Christian couple is self-control (Titus 2:2; 5-6). Put on the brakes on the feelings of anger and curb their tongues from lashing out. Demonstration of self-control is a powerful teaching tool for your children to emulate.
  - *Privacy* – Mom and dad should go to a room by themselves and keep their voices down as they work through the disagreement.
  - *Resolution* – disagreements and problems should be resolved as soon as possible.

*“Do not let the son go down while you are still angry”  
-- Ephesians 4:26*

Parents can rejoin the family after they have solved their problems and have asked for forgiveness. The children need to see that the parents are in one accord again. This adds to the feeling of stability in children.

**5) Uphold other authorities before your children** –

- Consider the other authorities in your child’s life: teachers, coaches, youth group leaders, police officers,
- You can never really worship God until you are quite happy with and grateful for His authority over you.
- Therefore we need to give our children a healthy picture of all true authorities.
- Help them see that these authorities are their friends, not their enemies, and that they have been placed here by God Himself.
- Be careful not to criticize your child’s teachers at the dinner table for so doing, you are destroying not only your own authority but God’s as well.

**6) Watch the way you talk about your childhood** –

- It’s important not to rub our negative memories onto our children.
- Do not dwell upon past sins or hang onto past guilt. Instead accept with faith our forgiveness in Christ.
- Remember that a child’s basic instinct is to imitate his parents, both their good and bad actions.
- Retell and emphasize the good memories from childhood so as to give our children a greater chance to embrace the good times in their own lives. It will also enable them to worship the Lord with greater freedom than you may have encountered as a child.

**7) Maintain personal standards** – James asks, “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? (James 2:14). Obviously, our deeds cannot merit us salvation, but they are the evidence of our faith.

- Check what you read and watch on television?
- Guard your language for it should be consistent with Christian behavior.
- Get rid of hypocrisy. According to many teenagers, hypocrisy is one of the principal excuses for abandoning the faith of their parents. They mean that our “walk” does not equal our “talk.”

*“Where one man reads the Bible, a hundred read you and me.”  
--Dwight Moody.*

**8) Strive to make your children proud of you --**

*“Parents are the pride of their children.” – Proverbs 17:6.*

Children have an inborn desire to be proud of their parents. Unfortunately Hollywood’s many portrayals of families in the last few decades showed parents as foolish, stupid, geeky, cowardly, selfish and only competent at embarrassing their children.

- Consider how we act toward our children in front of their friends.
- Do not find fault with them or humiliate and belittle them.
- Take a friendly, sincere interest in our children’s friends, not trying to be a “cool” young person.
- Greet their friends warmly and smile at them. Ask about their families and interests.
- Avoid saying anything that might embarrass your child.
- As they develop pride in their parents, they will learn to be proud of the God who loves them. This will encourage them to share their faith in this wonderful Lord, and never to be ashamed to worship openly with all their hearts.

**9) Love your spouse above your children** – In terms of inspiring a child to adore God, this principle is probably the most important. The *absence of overt affection* between parents can raise doubts within a child that can later transfer to misgivings, insecurity and distrust.

Showing open affection like hugs and appropriate embraces are important. As children routinely see great love expressed between parents, they are filled with confidence that the household is in good order, that all is well at the top. When father comes home from work and hugs mother and then the children, this gives them a feeling of stability and security.

Knowing that Dad's first priority is Mom and that Mom's first priority is Dad helps children recognize God's order for the home. When a parent shows more love for a child than for a spouse, this actually increases the child's insecurity and self-centeredness.

The best way to raise a worship child is to love your spouse as Christ loves the Church, putting the spouse first and then the child – without anything in between: job, career, hobbies.

The correct order is: God, your spouse, your child, and everything else.

When children sense that their parents' world is in the right order, then it is easier for them to get their world together. It creates a long-term stability that will establish God as the center of their world, which indeed is. It provides them with the warmth and security portrayed in Robert Browning's famous poem that concludes:

*“God's in his heaven;  
All's right with the world.”*