

How to Have A Family Altar

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CHAPTER FOUR

The Family Altar and the Blessing of Persuasion

PERSUASION IS ANOTHER OF the great blessings of the family altar. By persuasion I mean the winning of the lost to our Lord. Many a godly father and mother have stood upon the promise of Acts 16:31 to claim salvation for their boys and girls. And we do rejoice in all the comfort this great promise of household salvation has brought to so many multitudes of believers.

But we would warn against a vain hope and a false confidence. We believe it is unscriptural to claim the promise of household salvation and at the same time neglect speaking of the Word to all that are in the house. "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house,**" is followed immediately by this significant statement: "**And they spake unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house**" (Acts 16:32).

In the case of the Philippian jailer, it is clear that the result of speaking the Word to all within the house was glorious saving faith, for we read: "**And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house**" (Acts 16:34).

If there are unsaved ones in your family, set up the family altar now; "**speak the Word**" to all in your home, and see GOD work to convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Recently a young father told me how his little three-year-old boy had prayed that very day at mealtime. He said the little son quoted scripture after scripture, pleaded GOD's promises, and asked GOD to save his unsaved loved ones, and to bless father and mother. At three years of age he was not only saved, but he had a real burden for souls. What is the secret of this beautiful, consecrated life?

It is this: the child's parents had spoken to him the Word of GOD. This they did, not haphazardly, but daily. As a result, he rejoiced and believed.

Through the family altar we have the pre-eminence of the Word of GOD, not only in the worship of the home but in the total life of the home. In Deuteronomy 6:5, we find the great command to "**Love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.**"

We generally stop there and are quite content, but carefully notice the command does not stop there. In the next few verses we read: "**And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart, 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. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts**

of thy house, and on thy gates."

Notice, GOD tells us five things about His Word and its relationship to the home. We are to:

1. Enshrine His Word in our hearts
2. Teach His Word diligently to our children.
3. Talk of His Word under all conditions
4. Bind His Word upon all we do (hands) and see (eyes)
5. Write His Word and send it out; (on posts of our house and on our gates)

Notice GOD's order: first, the Word is cherished and enshrined in the heart and then it is taught to the children, and talked in the home. Then GOD mentions the binding of the Word on all we see and do and, of course, this saturation of the household with GOD's Word naturally results in a real missionary concern for others, and so the Word is to be written on the posts and gateway for the outside world to see.

These five exaltations of GOD's Word make up what may be rightly called the full meaning of the family altar.

The family altar is more than a set devotion within the home - it is in its fullest meaning to be the life of the home. The enshrining, teaching, and talking of the Word are especially emphasized and carried out in the time set aside for the family worship.

Without a definite daily time for family worship, the Word of GOD will never in any wise be enshrined as it should. The devotion of family worship naturally becomes a vital part of family living. Thus the family altar as worship and devotion cannot logically, experimentally, or Scripturally be severed from the family altar as life. The deep and simple wisdom of the divine order appears from the fact that we can't live something we do not know.

We may know more than we live and witness, but we will never live and witness more than we know.

Paul said in II Timothy 3:10, 11: "**But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions.**" Your home is a Christian home only if GOD's Word is exalted within the home as GOD commands that it shall be. The family altar is really diligent teaching of the Word of GOD to ourselves and to our children. The greatest Bible institute in the world is a father reading the open Bible to his family.

C. R. Howell in *JESUS in the Family* says: "Family religion follows upon personal religion. The life of the first is the strength of the second. The neglect of either is the death of both." "**If any provide not for his own... house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel**" (I Timothy 5:8).

A Christian's home, and all it holds within is "**sanctified by the Word of God and prayer**"; and it is sanctified in no other manner. JESUS cannot be said to live in a home which is not sanctified by these domestic means of grace; nor can the head of such a home properly be called Christian.

Someone has likened a family without prayer to a house without a roof, open to all foul winds and weather.

A truly Christian home has been well said to be "the only bliss of paradise that has survived the fall."

"Happy the home where JESUS' name
Is sweet to every ear;
Where children early lisp His fame,
And parents hold Him dear."

GOD styles Abraham His "**friend**" (Isaiah 41:8) and of him GOD said, "**I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord**" (Genesis 18:19).

GOD Himself bound personal and family religion together. Like husband and wife, they are made inseparably one. "**These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart**"; there is personal religion; and family religion treads immediately on its heels, "**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 6:6, 7).

This may fall into the hands of a son or daughter in a prayerless home. If so, your Father in Heaven may be intending by your means to lead your parents to CHRIST. Andrew "**first findeth his own brother, Simon . . . and he brought him to Jesus**" (John 1:41,42). Cannot you, in the same way, bring your parents to JESUS?

Disobedience to GOD's clear command in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, to enshrine the Word of GOD in the home, is responsible for most of the Modernism, worldliness, and lukewarmness in the past forty years. This terrible drop in the number of family altar homes has let in a flood tide of unbelief and godlessness.

Before the Modernist tore down the altars in our churches, we had torn down the altars in our homes.

Before worldly indifference paralyzed our churches, it had paralyzed our homes.

Before the pastors denied the Word of GOD in the churches, parents had denied the Word of GOD access in their home life.

Much prayer is going up to GOD these days for an old-fashioned revival, and we are standing on the promise of II Chronicles 7:14. But prayers according to II Chronicles 7:14 are not sufficient if we do not also yield obedience to GOD's Word in our home. Prayer according to II Chronicles 7:14 and obedience to Deuteronomy 6:5-9 form a solid foundation upon which to see GOD build the beautiful temple of revival and spiritual awakening!

In Isaiah 28:10 we have another great blessing of the family altar - the blessing of a wonderful plan. We read: "**For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.**" Did you ever stop to realize that just the regular and consistent study of GOD's Word every day is in itself a great blessing?

Spiritual training must be thorough and consistent. The child takes on the spiritual pattern that he finds in his home. Daily family worship builds spiritual steadfastness and dependability into a child's life. And this is an attitude toward life and the things of God that will remain with him to the end of his earthly pilgrimage. If any parent will follow GOD's prescription in Isaiah 28:10 for the spiritual training of his children, we can promise that their children will grow up to be steadfast, able, and dependable Christians.

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