

How to Have A Family Altar

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

Conducting the Family Altar in the Light of Child Needs (Concluded)

Adolescence-Ages:12-18 Years

NATURE AND NEEDS

THE CHILD of 12-15 is developing a character of marked individuality. He is now in the process of developing a distinctive personality around certain ideals, values, and desires. These ideals, values, and desires will constitute what we term his role in life. In plays the actors take roles and enact them.

The young adolescent is determining his role in life and will act accordingly as he conceives his role. His motives will develop in terms of his accepted role. Along with the organization of his personality around chosen values, ideals, and desires will come a fuller development of conscience. Conscience quite largely takes its final development in terms of one's accepted role in life.

That is, a boy thinks this is wrong if it doesn't fit in with his chosen role in life and he thinks that is right which does fit in. Hence if one has identified himself with a wrong role in life, his conscience is as defective as his role! D. L. Moody warned that conscience is not a trustworthy guide. Only the Word of GOD applied by the HOLY SPIRIT is a trustworthy guide.

Because the child is developing his role in life, he is becoming more intensely interested in the things of the spirit. Yet because of his unfamiliarity with these things, he is usually very unstable in the expression of his interest.

His instability may lead to extremes, spiritual enthusiasm or to extreme doubt and unbelief. It is almost certain that there will be some doubts in this period, but they will be at their height in the next age level, 15-17 years.

AIM

The aim of parental guidance should be to assist the child to make the proper adjustments to himself, to parents, to companions, to teachers, and to the Lord.

In family worship, parents should seek to provide the child with heroes and above all with worthy thought concerning CHRIST as the ideal Person and the One who has all power in Heaven and earth.

FAMILY ALTAR SUBJECT MATTER

Biographical material from both the Old and New Testament is especially valuable for this age group. The stories and the great characters of the Word of GOD have a strong appeal. During this period it is wise to instruct the child in the Book of Proverbs. Hebrews 11 will do much to offset threatening doubt. John 14-17 should be chapters frequently read and also John 1, 3, and 4.

Genesis 1, 2, and 3 should be covered carefully and wisely set forth. Such will prepare the child against false conceptions of man's origin and destiny and sin which he may soon hear from godless secular teachers. The child who is not so prepared will find his natural tendency to doubt running away with him in these next few years, and his parents may be surprised that they have within their family a rebellious, Bible-scorning unbeliever!

First Corinthians 13 should be frequently read and commented upon. Dwight L. Moody said that if the church would live in I Corinthians 13 just a few days it would do more to revolutionize the life of the church than anything else he could think of! If boys and girls of this age were faithfully guided to live this chapter, it would do more than any other one thing to guide their growing lives aright. **"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."** **"Charity never faileth!"** Emphasize Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7.

During this period it should be impressed upon the child that he has a nature that is at enmity with GOD. Every individual has his own and GOD's greatest enemy living inside him. Romans 7 is a classic study of the driving of the carnal nature to destroy the effectiveness of the "new man within" and to reign in the life of the believer!

Failure to realize how corrupt our nature is causes us to sin and then defend ourselves; to excuse ourselves and oftentimes project our sins upon the lives of others.

To send boys and girls out into life with the idea that they are naturally all right gives the corrupt nature full scope of operation without any check of self-judgment.

Show the child what manner of person he is in CHRIST - a new creation (II Corinthians 5:17). Every true believer receives the divine nature (II Peter 1:4) and the divine life (John 3:15). The understanding of this caused John to exclaim: **"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God . . . Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be"** (I John 3:1,2).

It is through the new creation which we receive from CHRIST that we are acceptable to GOD and can live victorious over sin (Galatians 5:16). The adolescent seeing clearly what he is in CHRIST and what he is in himself apart from CHRIST will be led to watch and pray lest he enter into temptation and sin. **"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other"** (Galatians 5:17).

Dwell much during these years on:

- Romans 3 - CHRIST as our Saviour;
- Romans 4 - faith to receive the gift of divine righteousness;

- Romans 5 - the origin of the sin in us and the righteousness of GOD upon us;
- Romans 6 - CHRIST as our Lord and life and our "**old man**" crucified with CHRIST.

Delve deeply into this chapter around your family altar, for it holds the secret of the victorious life.

- Romans 7 - the intense striving of the God-hating flesh against the new life in CHRIST.
- Romans 8 - GOD's full provision for overcoming life for every believer. The stress in Romans 8 is on the HOLY SPIRIT! Read Romans 6 and 8 together. They form GOD's complete thought on the basis of the overcoming life.

God inserts that seventh chapter of defeat and struggle between Romans 6 and 8 to warn us to be ever watchful if our positional blessings in CHRIST are to become our experimental appropriations in CHRIST!

Study Romans 12:1-16 to see how the overcoming life is applied in actual life situations.

MISSIONARY ZEAL

Cultivate the missionary zeal of your child, still using stories about the mission field or missionary heroes whom GOD has greatly used.

SERVICE

Encourage the work of social service, or works that will help someone else. The child of this age has many opportunities to help others. Good memory work is found in II Timothy 4:7, 8; Ephesians 6:10-17; Psalm 119:9-16; I Corinthians 1:13.

NATURE OF YOUTH - AGES: 15-18 YEARS

Middle adolescence spiritually is a time of

- (1) intellectual doubts and difficulties which may be accompanied with emotional upheaval;
- (2) the intensifying and heightening of spiritual consciousness and concern which in many cases leads to conversion.

On the first point we can say that the doubts and difficulties come from the child's attempt to integrate his spiritual and Scriptural knowledge with the facts of a now rapidly enlarging world of understanding.

This is a process which is going on all our lives, but it is especially acute for the adolescent. He seems, all of a sudden, to be introduced into a whole new world of facts both inside his own personality and outside in his rapidly expanding world.

If he has been a stranger to spiritual and Scriptural knowledge and he suddenly now begins to appropriate such blessed knowledge, he still will have the difficult (to him at least) task of absorbing this knowledge with all the other new facts he is learning.

The parents must understand that the doubts and questionings need in no wise to become deeply rooted. If wise guidance is given, this period will pass and the doubts will be dissolved into a vital, enlarged and working faith. Your words of counsel can best be given indirectly around the family altar from the Word of GOD itself. In your personal conferences you may let your child pour out all his doubts and questionings - getting them out of his system while you patiently listen and silently pray.

Then after he has talked himself out, you may drop a wise word and pray with and for him.

Adolescence is not only a period of questionings but of tremendous rise of the spiritual consciousness in a very personal sense. This period is one of the richest and most fruitful in souls saved. There are probably more conversions in these years than in any other period in the human life. The overall picture is not a happy one because we know that conviction reaches young hearts more quickly than it does the older, worldly wise, and sophisticated.

That does not imply that the HOLY SPIRIT does not wrestle with older adults and overcome their hardness or blindness of heart. All children of Christian parents should most surely be saved before they reach this stage. They will be if they have been brought up around the family altar. If your children have been saved early, this rising tide of spiritual desire will quickly be accepted by your child and used for the deepening of his spiritual life and his consecration to our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

This rising spiritual desire is God-implanted and occurs in the lives of all children between the ages of 14 and 18 years. It is GOD's pleading, forceful call to the adolescent before his character is set in the molds of adulthood and before he sets out to assume the responsibilities and duties of adult life. It is as though GOD could not see the child enter adulthood without knowing his soul's deep need and the One who is "**the way, the truth, and the life.**"

We may thank GOD that in case the parents failed to make the child aware of his soul's need, all is not lost; for GOD puts the awareness within the child himself and then increases it in the critical years just before adulthood!

If you have been one of those parents who have had no family altar and have neglected the spiritual welfare of your child, here is a mercy of GOD that will be your mighty aid in helping you to make up somewhat for lost opportunities; if you act now you may yet lead your child to CHRIST and see him cross the portals of adulthood saved, safe, and secure in CHRIST!

There is a youthful tendency to excesses and sometimes to extreme emotional and mental upheavals. Therefore, wise parents will see that the physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs are cared for. The youth should be encouraged in taking up some sport as an answer to physical needs. The mental life will be taken care of in school, and the spiritual around the family altar and also through the loving companionship and guidance of the parent.

AIMS

Our chief aim is to guide the spiritual growth of this child. Read the chapter on "*General Survey*

of Adolescence" and note further the drives which characterize this period. Our task is to direct these forces into Scripturally acceptable channels. To this end we will ask GOD's guidance in the choice of Scripture, for reading and exposition at our family worship. We will not rush into our family worship in a careless and haphazard manner. We will prayerfully plan the Scripture content and the remarks to fit into the needs of growing children.

SCRIPTURE AND EXPOSITORY CONTENT

The youth of 15-18 is eagerly looking forward to a full life as an adult member of society. He is in the final period of preparation for adult life and responsibilities in the world about him. He wants to live fully, richly, and creatively! But to realize his ambition and desire he must know something about life!

There are five things every young man or woman should know about life by the time he has reached his eighteenth birthday. These things are found in the five experience books of the Old Testament - Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and the Psalms:

1. Life As Suffering - Job
2. Life As Wisdom - Proverbs
3. Life As Vanity - Ecclesiastes
4. Life As Consecration and Divine Love - Song of Solomon
5. Life As Government - Psalms

Your young person must know what is a life of vanity that he may avoid it.

He must know what is a life of wisdom that he may ever seek and know how to live according to the ways of sanctified common sense. He must know what is a life of suffering that he may know how to ferret out rich spiritual values and experience deeper communion with our Lord JESUS CHRIST while in the furnace of suffering. He must know what is a life of consecration and divine love that he may realize the capstone of all Christian experience - CHRIST, our Bridegroom, and we His Bride. The deepest joy of salvation and of all living is to know CHRIST in this deep way of love.

Salvation is a thrilling, blessed love affair between CHRIST and the believer.

He must know the government of life that he may understand the divine basis for life, the providence of GOD and the inescapable truth of Galatians 6:7-9. **"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."**

As he understands this he knows obedience to GOD is the key to a happy, fruitful life. Your youth must know what is life as government that he may realize how the enveloping providence of GOD covers every act and event in life.

You will notice that all the Scriptures we mention have particular benefit to children at certain

age levels and with certain growing needs; but these same Scriptures also have values for adults as well.

Every basic problem the children face is also faced by adults in some form or another. If you have several children, plan the family altar so that in the course of a week each one of them will have been especially ministered to.

The study of the young men and women of Scripture will point up valuable insights which may be put to practical use. Study the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Lot. Lot - how eager for worldly fame and wealth, and with what result! What happened to Abraham who chose his fame and wealth in an entirely different realm and direction? Study David, his call while young, his great blessing by GOD and how GOD sustained him in trials. Then what happened later when he became lax and easy-going, playing with lust and sin! Or Jacob, how willful - a perfect picture of independence without GOD, until GOD finally broke him. But look at all the bitter, wasted years before this! What lessons for the adolescent who is gradually gaining independence from parent control, but not from GOD-control.

Cain and Abel furnish an interesting study in contrast.

The adolescent has the Cain and Abel ways before him.

He is often tempted to be proud and scornful of GOD's Word, even as Cain was.

Study Joseph who was tested along the lines of unpopularity, purity, freedom from parental control, and growing responsibilities, but in every test he remained true to GOD. In being true to GOD he found a larger life of freedom than he had ever dared to think or imagine; he won popularity with men in the right and God-honoring way.

In the life of the Lord JESUS the young people see the way to walk and the pattern of life which will most fully answer their need. As they behold Him in His Word they discover their faith in Him increasing. They are to turn their problems over to CHRIST, to guide their steps to victory.

Show the danger of becoming impatient and rushing ahead of CHRIST or of taking things back into their own hands in self-will. Worry is based on a wrong method of meeting life's problems, a method whose center and emphasis is on self! Joyous and expectant living is based on the right method of meeting life, a method whose center and emphasis is trust in the Lord. CHRIST is our righteousness, peace, joy. He is our solution to life's problems.

Abraham is called the father of them that believe.

Study the life:

- of Abraham for the grandeur of faith;
- of Isaac for the rest of faith;
- of Jacob for the victory of faith;
- Joseph for the glory of faith.

Faith is the victory! Show how our Lord JESUS combines in His life all four of these qualities of

faith.

The children between 12 and 18 years of age should be encouraged to read the Scripture portion and to make a few timely comments.

They should now feel at ease in praying at the family altar. We should by example, practice, and teaching, train our children until they catch the spirit of prayer that is in the Word of GOD.

We should read portions from the great writers on prayer, such as E. M. Bounds, R. A. Torrey, and Charles Finney. The spirit of prayer that is in the Word of GOD is not easily attained, for all we are by "fallen nature" is against it. Satan and his host of demons work against a real spirit of prayer. The world with all its hustle and bustle in the energy of self-effort further serves to prevent us ever attaining the spirit of prayer.

The years 15-18 afford the high point of interest and power for the most special and thoughtful kind of emphasis on prayer.

What you have by GOD's grace to give him, give to him now while he is most open and responsive to receive.

~ end of chapter 11 ~
