

Eph 6:4
Loving Instruction

1. Preamble
 - a. Announcements...
2. Prayer...
3. Introduction
 - a. My parents are in their early 70s.
 - i. They have been Christians for nearly 50 years.
 - ii. They were actively involved in all three churches during that 50-year period.
 - iii. My dad served on the elder board in all three churches.
 - iv. This enabled my parents to observe literally hundreds of Christian families for five decades.
 - b. Several times over the years, I heard my dad say something like this...
 - i. “The vast majority of the kids who ended up adopted the Christianity of their parents have all had one thing in common.”
 - ii. What do you think that one thing was???
 1. Was it private school? No... (although private school can be very useful)
 2. Was it home school? No... (although home schooling can be very useful)
 3. Was it particular denomination?
 4. Was it a robust youth ministry experience? (although God can use youth ministry)
 5. Was it a specific parenting technique? No!!!
 - c. What was it?
 - i. According to my dad, the one thing that the vast majority of them had in common was consistent biblical instruction in the home—from Dad.
 - ii. Instruction takes place both formally and informally.
 - iii. Yet, formal instruction in the form of family worship is often the most effective means of instruction.
 - d. Why is family worship so important?
 - i. One pastor and scholar writes,
 1. “As goes the home, so goes the church, so goes the nation. Family worship is a most decisive factor in how the home goes. Family worship is not the only factor, of course... Family worship without parental example is futile. Spontaneous teaching that arises throughout a typical day is crucial, yet set times of family worship are also important. Family worship is the foundation of biblical child-rearing.” (Beeke, Family Worship, Kindle Locations 66-70).
 - ii. Another scholar writes,
 1. “Family religion, which depends not a little on the household head daily leading the family before God in worship, is one of the most powerful structures that . . .

God has given for the expansion of redemption through the generations.” (Beeke quoting Douglas Kelly, Family Worship, Kindle Location 107-110)

- e. Ok... I get it, you think family worship is important. But is it in the Bible?
 - i. Yes... this brings us to Ephesians 6:4.
 - ii. I want to make five observations about family worship.

1. The leader of family worship

- a. Who is called to lead family worship? Fathers... I mentioned the fathers last week, and I'm going to mention them again today.
- b. Father's led family worship in the OT.
 - i. There are several examples of this, consider just two....
 - ii. **Psalm 78:2-7 (ESV)** — **2** I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, **3** things that we have heard and known, that our *fathers* have told us. **4** We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. **5** He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our *fathers* to teach to their children, **6** that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, **7** so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments;
 - iii. In addition, we learn in the book of Exodus that God commands fathers to teach their families through the Passover feast (Ex. 12-13).
- c. The NT contains very little instruction on parenting but the instruction it contains is specifically addressed to fathers
 - i. **Ephesians 6:4 (ESV)** — **4** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
 - ii. **Colossians 3:21 (ESV)** — **21** Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.
- d. God gives fathers an enormous amount of influence over their children.
 - i. Consider the conclusion of an important Swiss study,
 - 1. "...in short, the study concluded, if a father does not go to church, no matter how faithful his wife's devotions, only one child in fifty (2%) will probably become regular adult worshippers. If a father goes regularly, regardless of the practice of the mother, between two-thirds and three-quarters of their children will become churchgoers (regular or irregular).” (Farley, 129-130)
 - ii. The fatherhood initiative notes:
 - 1. “Teens from fatherless homes are: 5 times more likely to commit suicide, 32 times more likely to run away, 20 times more likely to have behavioral disorders,

14 times more likely to commit rape, 9 times more likely to drop out of high school, 10 times more likely to abuse chemical substances, 9 times more likely to end up in a state-operated institution, and 20 times more likely to end up in prison.” (Farley, 132)

2. Side note... in 2015, 41% of all babies born into American homes, were born without fathers, which means our nation is in deep trouble. To put this in perspective, that number was 5% in 1960.
- iii. Even the deceased rapper—Tupac Shakur (1971-1996)—understood the importance of fatherhood. He said,
 1. “I know for a fact that had I had a father, I’d have some discipline. I’d have more confidence.”
 2. He admitted that he began running with gangs because he wanted the things a father gives a child, especially a boy—he wanted structure and protection.
- e. Fathers, you matter, much more than our culture admits.
 - i. God has given you tremendous influence over your children for good or ill.
 - ii. We must use that influence to teach our children the things of God.
 - iii. This happens formally through family worship.
 - iv. Dads it is your privilege to rally the family for family worship.
 - v. You may be thinking, my wife knows the Bible better than me.
 1. In one sense, that is irrelevant.
 2. This is your job not her job.
 3. God has called you, not your wife, to this task. As a result, we can be sure that God will bless our efforts.
 - vi. Our moms important? Yes, they are critical...
 1. Our wives can remind us, they can encourage us, they can read sometimes, but the initiative and the passion need to come from dad.
 - vii. Furthermore, instruction in the things of God is not the primary responsibility of the private school, SS, or youth pastor. Fathers, this is your primary responsibility.
 - viii. In addition, Dads, don’t assume that because this is happening during the day as part of a home school curriculum that you are off the hook. Your kids need to see you with your Bible open.
 - ix. If you consistently, though imperfectly initiate family devotions your kids are going to learn really quick, what is important to dad.
 - x. Mention MacArthur’s book and Dr. Clark’s dissertation...
 - xi. But is family worship even biblical??? Yes, this brings us to point two.

xii. *First, the leader of family worship!*

2. The mandate for family worship

- a. **Ephesians 6:4 (ESV)** — **4** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- b. The NT does not say allot about family worship, but this verse is all we need.
- c. Paul tells dads to bring their kids up in the “discipline and instruction of the Lord.”
- d. As I said last week, discipline is the shaping of the will through training and correction. While instruction is the shaping of the mind through teaching and admonition. (RSB)
- e. Scholars argue that the phrase “of the Lord” is probably a subjective genitive or a genitive of quality, which means that this is instruction that proceeds from the Lord. In other words, it is instruction from the words of the Lord contained in the Bible.
- f. We see similar admonitions in the OT.
 - i. **Deuteronomy 6:6–7 (ESV)** — **6** And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. **7** You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.
 - ii. Commenting on these verses, one scholar writes,
 - iii. “Moses wasn’t suggesting a little talk, but diligent conversation and diligent instruction that flow from the burning heart of a parent. Moses says that words from God should be in a father’s heart. Fathers must diligently teach these words to their children.” (Beeke, Family Worship, Kindle Locations 169-171).
 - iv. The father in Deut. 6, is a father who is involved in ongoing, diligent, pervasive instruction...
- g. Application:
 - i. Ephesians 6:4 is a direct command given to all fathers.
 1. This is not a suggestion!
 2. Paul is not saying that Bible instruction is a nice thing to do.
 3. He is commanding all fathers, everywhere, to instruct their children from the Bible.
 4. This can’t be delegated to youth group, private school, or a Sunday school teacher.
 5. Although all these things are welcome and wonderful supplements to what Dad is doing at home.
 - ii. Other generations took Paul’s mandate for family worship more seriously than we do.

1. Consider the Westminster directory for public worship, written in the 1640s. This was written to provide instructions for pastors. One section describes how to handle fathers who neglect family worship.
2. It says, "...the head of the family is to be first admonished privately to amend his fault. If he continues to be negligent, he is to be gravely and solemnly reprov'd by the session. If he still neglects family worship, for his obstinacy in such an offence he is to be suspended and debarred from the Lord's Supper, being rightly regarded as unworthy of participation in the sacrament until he rectifies the situation." (Beeke, Family Worship, Kindle Location 648-651).

h. I understand the mandate for family worship... but why should I do it??? This brings us to the third point...

i. The leader of family worship

j. The mandate for family worship

3. The motives for family worship

a. Motive one- the eternal welfare of your children

- i. God uses means to save our children.
- ii. He gives parents four primary means.

1. The preaching of God's Word
2. The prayer of godly parents
3. The example of godly parents
4. Family worship

iii. Yes, God is absolutely sovereign over our kid's salvation, but we will still be held accountable on the day of judgment for how we trained our kids.

iv. We must never forget that heaven and hell hang in the balance...

v. "Daily training is only for a mere twenty years or less, and even those years are not guaranteed. We ought to conduct family worship in the awareness of how brief life is in terms of never-ending eternity. Children will sense this reality if family worship is done with earnestness, love, warmth, and consistency." (Beeke, Family Worship, Kindle Locations 595-598).

b. Motive two- the fruitfulness of your children

i. **Psalm 1:1-4 (ESV)** — **1** Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; **2** but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. **3** He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

ii. We want to help our kids meditate on God's Word... so they can experience God's blessings.

c. Motive three- faith in God's means

- i. I'm going to lead in family worship because I trust that God knows what is best for my family and children.

d. Illustration-

- i. When I was still under my parent's roof family worship was a non-negotiable...
- ii. It did not matter if I had chemistry homework, math homework, or something else... these things had to wait.
- iii. What he did???
- iv. How we resisted... (Show cover of Doug's book- Why children matter)
- v. The teen years...
- vi. What is the fruit of my dad's labors?
 1. Pretty impressive....
- vii. *Family worship sounds great... but there are so many obstacles.*

e. *The leader of family worship.*

f. *The mandate for family worship*

g. *The motives for family worship*

4. The obstacles to family worship

a. I'm about to slaughter a sacred cow.

- i. Sports are one of the main obstacles to family worship.
- ii. I love sports. I played soccer for four years, football for five years, and tennis five days a week year-round from 8th grade on...
- iii. Three of my boys are currently involved in sports.
- iv. All that to say, I'm not against sports.
- v. Here is my concern... our culture expects parents to have each child involved in three sports a year, from age 5 onward.
- vi. This frenetic pace makes family worship nearly impossible.
- vii. This pressure is unique. In other words, this is a late 20th century American phenomenon. It never existed until about 35 years ago.
- viii. We need to recognize that we are blind to the idols of our culture.
- ix. If it is not athletics, it is piano, violin, Lego club, chess club, or something else.
- x. Dads, I'm not saying don't pursue excellence in sports for the glory of God.
- xi. But, I am saying, that you are going to have to work extra hard to find time for family worship. You may have to do family worship at 6am instead of a 6pm.
- xii. Your kids are only with you for 18 short years. You, through family worship, can have a massive impact on where they will spend eternity.

b. Another obstacle- Our kids are in very different seasons of life...

- i. We have a 17-year-old and a 7-year-old... what should we do?

- ii. Teach to the oldest child.
 - iii. The younger ones will pick up on more than you think.
 - iv. You can start when your children are young... 3-4 years old.
 - v. Don't stop when they get into high school... huge mistake.
- c. Another obstacle- I'm too tired...
- i. "Even when you're bone-weary after a day's work, pray for strength to carry out your fatherly duty. Remember that Christ Jesus went to the cross for you bone-weary and exhausted but never shrunk from His mission. As you deny yourself, you will see how He strengthens you during family worship, so that by the time you finish, your exhaustion is overcome." (Beeke, Family Worship, Kindle Locations 300-303).
- d. I'm a hypocrite
- i. How can I lead my family in devotions when I sin so much?
 - ii. Confess your sins to God and your family
 - iii. Ask God for grace...
 - iv. Ask God to help you be a better example.
- e. My kids are out of the home
- i. Pray for them
 - ii. Pray for your grandchildren
 - iii. Maybe you need to confess your neglect to them
- f. *The leader of family worship*
- g. *The mandate for family worship*
- h. *The motives for family worship*
- i. *The obstacles to family worship*

5. The specifics of family worship

- a. Pick a time
- i. morning or evening...
 - ii. family dinner can be a huge means of grace...
 - iii. develop a routine so that your children and wife know what to expect.
- b. Remind kids of the rules
- i. Sit up
 - ii. Look at me
 - iii. Don't touch your brother
 - iv. If they disobey use the rod... or make them do the dishes by themselves.
 - v. Remind them that God is addressing them...
- c. Keep it simple
- i. Read text and ask a few questions
 - ii. What is the main point of this passage?
 - iii. What does this text say about humans?
 - iv. What does this text say about God?
 - v. Paul Proctor's grandfather...
- d. Keep it short
- i. For really young kids this may be 5 minutes

- ii. Our family spends about 10-15 minutes after dinner
 - iii. Pray (memorize the lord's prayer as a family)
- e. Discuss worldview issues...
 - i. Prager U videos...
 - ii. The art of manliness...
- f. Pray together
 - i. When you pray, it teaches your kids how to pray.
 - ii. Ask them for prayer requests.
 - iii. Thomas Brooks said, "A family without prayer is like a house without a roof, open and exposed to all the storms of heaven." Beeke, Family Worship, Kindle Locations 190-191).
- g. Use Bribery on occasion...
 - i. Chocolate covered almonds.
- h. On Sundays talk about the sermon with your family.
 - i. How this goes in our family...
- i. Pick an age-appropriate Bible (allot of these have questions built in).
 - i. For young kids consider the Jesus Story book Bible
 - ii. We read the Action Bible several times.
 - iii. When they are in late grade school or Junior high consider the Vos Bible.
 - iv. We have read
 1. The pilgrims progress
 2. Big truths for little hearts
 3. Who is Jesus by Gilbert
 4. Simply put podcast...
 - v. As my kids get older, I chose Bibles with less pictures and more text.
- j. Make sure family worship is connected with fun and affection.
 - i. Wrestle with your young kids before family worship... seriously.
 - ii. Give them lots of hugs, physical affection, and affirmation.
 - iii. Tell them you are proud of them.
 - iv. Tell them you love them.

6. Conclusion:

- a. Let me end with some gospel hope...
 - i. You will fall off the family worship wagon.
 1. Get back on the wagon when you fall off.
 2. You will fail...
 3. God never fails us.
 4. We must repent when we stray and look to God for grace.
 5. He will give it.
 6. Jesus died for us...

- ii. You will also need the Holy Spirit's help (Ephesians 5:18)
- b. Dad's...
 - i. "No duty in my life is more important and more sacred than my role as a husband and a father. That is where my true character is most accurately seen, and it is the best single gauge of my overall success or failure as a leader and a role model... no one can have a more potent or longer lasting influence for good in a child's life than a spiritually strong father." (John MacArthur)
- c. **Joel Tampien testimony**....
- d. Lets pray....