

Family Worship Element #1: Scripture
Family Worship Gathering Lunch & Learn #3
January 7, 2024

1. Opening Remarks

- a. Welcome back to our family worship gathering!
- b. It makes my **heart happy** to have **so many families** here **hungry** to learn more about how bring glory to God in the home.
- c. Why don't we begin with a word of prayer?

2. Opening Prayer

3. Introduction

- a. In our **first two sessions** we focused on the **what** and **why** of family worship.
- b. Now this week, we turn to the **how** question.
 - i. Specifically, what does it **look like** for our family to read ***Scripture***, ***sing***, and ***pray*** together? What **tools** and **resources** can we use to lead family worship in a **simple** and **sustainable** way?
 - ii. I once came across some findings from a survey taken by parents from **36 different evangelical churches** across the country.
 - 1. The data showed that the **two main reasons** why most Christian parents are disengaged from their children's spiritual development are #1: lack of ***time*** and #2: lack of ***training***.
 - 2. In the first place, parents have allowed their families to become **so busy** that **there's little time left** to pour into their children spiritually. And that's a real problem.

3. But the issue we're going to address today is lack of **training**. Even though **77%** of the parents surveyed desired training on how to disciple their children, only **7%** of them could say without reservation that their church had actually trained them.
4. The **data we collected** from our **family discipleship survey** last year came to almost the exact same conclusions.
 - a. We learned that you parents were **hungry** to grow in your ability to lead your family spiritually.
 - b. You just didn't know **where to start**.
 - c. You needed **training**.
5. That's what the **next three weeks** are **all about**. Each session will focus on one of the **three elements** of family worship: reading, singing, or praying.
 - a. And **the goal** will be to provide you with the **tools, resources, and encouragement** you need, whether you're **just getting started** or whether you've already started but want to take family worship to **the next level**.
- c. **This week's topic** is the **most important** of all, and that's ***Reading Scripture***.
 - i. There are about **thirty different occasions** in the Bible that **emphasize the importance** of older generations passing down God's Word to younger generations.
 - ii. And that only makes sense, right? **Moses** and **Jesus** both taught that we cannot live by **bread alone**, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.
 - iii. Which led Matthew Henry to conclude, "It is **better to be without bread** in your houses than without the Bible."

- d. So, with our **bellies** now full of delicious food, let's turn now to **nourish our souls** together as families.
 - i. As we did at our **last gathering**, I'm going to have you read and discuss a passage of Scripture together.
 - ii. One purpose behind this is to give you a **laboratory** in which to **practice what we're learning**.
 - iii. So, the passage we'll be discussing is a familiar one, from Deuteronomy 6. *This is Moses urging the Israelites to love God and to impress that love for God on their children.*
 - iv. So, why don't you have someone from each table ***read the passage aloud***, and then you can ***discuss the two simple questions*** that are printed for you in the **handout**:
 - 1. ***When*** does Moses command parents to teach their children? -and-
 - 2. ***What*** does Moses command parents to teach their children?
 - 3. And if there's any **time left** you can discuss whatever **leaps off the page**.
 - 4. Then we'll **circle back up** for discussion.

4. Family Bible Study

- a. First of all, **when** does Moses command parents to teach their children?
 - i. Moses tells us that God's Word should be on our lips from **breakfast to bedtime**, from **A.M. to P.M.**, from **sunrise to sunset**, from **dawn till dusk**.
 - ii. Moses is talking here about what we might call ***family discipleship***. It's this **big, umbrella term** that encompasses everything we do as parents to pass on the Christian faith to our children.

- iii. Now, underneath this **big umbrella** of family discipleship we can think in terms of *planned* and *unplanned*.
 - 1. It's important to strike **some sort of balance** here.
 - 2. If all our spiritual conversations are *planned*, our faith might start to seem overly **rigid, formal, compartmentalized** to our kids.
 - 3. If all our spiritual conversations are *unplanned*, that's well and good, but we won't be providing our kids with a full-orbed understanding of Scripture.

- iv. Moses speaks of impressing God's Word on our children "**when you walk by the way**," when you're out and about, as it were.
 - 1. It's this encouragement to be on the **lookout** for **UNPLANNED teachable moments**, for opportunities to **shape** our children's **worldview** with Scripture,
 - 2. So, there should be a couple of **orange handouts** on each table. We'll be **referencing this a lot** today.
 - 3. On the bottom of the **back page**, I have a **brief section** called "Teachable Moments/Parenting Using Scripture."
 - 4. If you're looking for books that will help you **capitalize** on **teachable moments** that come up throughout the day and to **weave Scripture** into how you converse with your kids, how you discipline your kids, how you encourage your kids, those are some books to check out.

- v. Now falling under this "**planned**" **category** what we've been calling *family worship*, which is this **habit of the household** *where we set apart intentional time to worship God as a family*.
 - 1. It's one way that we can apply Moses' exhortation in verse 7 to speak of God's Word "when you sit in your house."

2. And we **catch a glimpse** of ancient family worship in practice in verses 20-25, where there's this **parent-child dialogue**.
 - a. The son asks his parents, "Why did God give us all these rules to obey? What's the meaning of them all?"
 - b. And Moses instructs the parents how to respond.
*He doesn't leave them **without training**, does he?*
- b. So, **what** does Moses command parents to teach their children?
 - i. There are really **two categories** in this passage.
 - ii. First, there's God's **DEEDS** in verses 21-23. And what are those deeds? Salvation and judgment.
 - iii. Then there's God's **DECREES**. This comes up first in verse 6: "these words that I **command** you today." But then the father brings this up again in verses 24-25.
 - iv. So, there's God's **DEEDS** and God's **DECREES**.
 1. **Another way to put it** is that there's **GOSPEL** and there's **LAW**.
 2. There's the **CROSS** and there's the **COMMANDS**.
 3. And that's a great summary of the contents of the Bible that we're urged to teach our children.
 - v. But notice where the **dominant emphasis** lies. The son asks, "Why do we need to keep all these rules?" And Moses tells the parents to respond, "We keep all these rules because of God's grace in saving us from slavery. What we do for God is in response to what He's done for us."
 1. It's a reminder that the main thing that we're commanded to teach our children over and over and over again is the **mighty deeds of God**. And those deeds culminate in the **death and resurrection** of Jesus Christ.

- a. It's only at this point, in response to God's grace, that Moses tells us we should **teach the commandments**.
- b. Because obedience flows out of the gospel.

2. *Our primary task in family worship is to **put the spotlight on God**.*

- a. As **David Michael** points out, though, the **sad reality** is that many children's Bibles and devotionals are worded in such a way that it makes the **human beings out to be the heroes**: "Joshua defeated Jericho." "David slew Goliath." "Peter healed the lame man." And so on.

- i. The result is that we sometimes give a **man-centered, moralistic** lesson that short-circuits worship and puts the **spotlight on us** instead of God.
- ii. *What if, instead, we told the biblical stories in a way that **magnified God** for his mighty deeds and **fanned the flames** of worship?*
- iii. *And what if we sought out devotional resources that were explicitly **God-centered**?*

- c. Well, let's do that. Now that we've **whetted our appetite** for the Word, let's move on to the **main course**.
 - i. For starters, let's recognize that everyone here is in a **different place** in the **journey**, and that's **perfectly okay!**
 - ii. What I'd like to do for the rest of our time is provide you with **tools** and **resources** for **whatever stage** you're currently at, whether your kids are **little** or **big**, and whether you're an **old pro** at family worship or you've **never opened** the Bible with your kids.

- iii. On the backside of the handout, you'll see that I've laid out **three phases or levels** of family worship:
 - 1. The **first phase** is where you're simply reading the Bible together. And that's a **tremendous place to start!**
 - 2. But maybe you're already doing that as a family and you want to go deeper; maybe you want to enter into **phase two**, which is reading the Bible *and* discussing it.
 - 3. And then there's **phase three**, where you're actively teaching a **biblical belief system** to your kids.
- iv. Now, in full disclosure, we're going to be covering **a lot of tools and resources**, and not all of it will be applicable to your family.
- v. So, **my encouragement** would be for you consider where your family is at right now, and try to be listening for one or two action steps or resources you might want to incorporate into what you're already doing.
- vi. So, **without further ado**, let's walk through **three different levels** or phases of family worship...

5. Phase #1: *Reading Scripture* (12:18-12:42)

- a. Let's say you're **pretty new** to family worship. It's not something your **own parents** emphasized growing up. You know about as much about family worship as I know about **quantum physics**.
- b. *Where should I start?*
- c. I'd like to suggest that the **best place to start** is simply opening up the Bible and **reading** it with your family.
- d. That's it. No **rocket science**. No **theological degrees** required. No **expertise necessary**. You just open up a passage and read it with your family.

- e. Alright, so let's **unpack** this a little bit. **First off:** *What, specifically, should we read?*
- i. There are a ton of **devotional books** out on the market. Some of them are very good. In fact, I'll be **recommending a few** in a moment.
 - ii. However, I've found that many **devo books** are short on Scripture and long on **human commentary**. And as a result, we're not feeding our kids with a **steady diet** of God's Word.
 - iii. So, at the end of the day, there's **no substitute** for simply reading a passage of Scripture aloud with your family.
 - iv. That said, let's talk about some of the **children's Bibles** that are listed for you on the **orange handout**.
 - v. For **babies ages 0-2**, I would highly recommend **Kevin DeYoung's *Biggest Story ABC***.
 1. It walks you through the **entire storyline** of Scripture all while introducing children to the **ABC's**.
 2. I've found that if you read this often enough, the little ones will have it **memorized** after just a few weeks.
 3. As Paul says of Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:15, it's possible for someone to be acquainted with Scripture from their **infancy**.
 4. **Never underestimate** the amount of truth that even the smallest babies are able to **absorb**.
 - vi. For toddlers, I would recommend ***The Beginner's Gospel Story Bible***, which contains 52 beautifully-illustrated Bible stories.
 1. What I really like about this Bible is that it comes with **excellent discussion questions** built right into the stories.

2. Now, when your kids are this age, the more **enthusiastically** and **dramatically** you can read the story, the better.
 - a. It really helps to **insert little questions** to hold their attention.
 - b. You may even **pause in the middle of the story** to ask, “What do you think Moses is going to do next?” Or, “How do you think God feels about this?” Questions like this really helps **draw them back** into the story after a **lull in the action**.
- vii. For **elementary schoolers**, you might find DeYoung’s ***Biggest Story Bible Storybook*** helpful.
 1. There are **104 Bible stories** here, two for each week, all gorgeously illustrated, and tied in wonderfully to the gospel.
- viii. Once children reach **upper elementary school** and **middle school**, it’s probably best just to get out an **official version** of the Bible like **the ESV**.
 1. Some kids will be ready for the grown-up version even **earlier than this**, and if so, great! The **earlier the better**.
 2. So, *how much should we read?* Well, the Bible doesn’t lay out any **specific guidelines** here. But you may want to start by simply reading through a **single story** or a **chapter** of the Bible each time you gather together.
 3. You may find it helpful reading through books of the Bible **consecutively** because that way you can always keep things **in context**, and you’ll start to make connections with things you read in the days prior.

4. You know, it's convenient that **Pastor Zach** preaches **through books of the Bible** at our church, because then you can set apart some time say, that weekend or on Saturday, to **read the next passage** that we'll be learning about on Sunday morning.
 5. There are any number of different Bible reading plans out there that you can find, but at the end of the day, as long as your children are getting a **steady diet** of God's Word, **you really can't go wrong.**
 6. One other **piece of advice** about Bible-reading is that it can be really helpful if everyone has their own Bible open instead of just the head of the household. That way, they can follow along. You might even let them read aloud or pray aloud to make it interactive for them.
- f. Now, if you're **just getting started** and you're trying to figure out how to **establish a rhythm** of **Bible-reading** in your home, I would suggest that you take this book that we handed out last time—*A Neglected Grace* by Jason Helopoulos—and read **chapter 7**, because there he provides **nine pieces of practical advice.**
- i. If you **didn't get a copy** of this book but you would like one, please ask me.
- g. To **cap off this first point** with an encouragement, I recently heard Kevin DeYoung say, "A **little bit of something** is better than a **whole lot of nothing.**"
- i. Just start out small.
 - ii. Maybe it's just **5-10 minutes** at a time, a few times a week.
 - iii. Just to **put that in perspective**, if you log just **20 minutes a week** in the Word together as a family, over the course of an entire year you will have read for **16 hours** and covered **approximately 20%** of the Bible together.

- iv. And it would be difficult to **overestimate** how deep of an impact the Word of God is having on your children, even if you **don't see immediate fruit** from it.
- v. One of the **best-respected authors** on the subject of family worship is **Donald Whitney**. In this video, he shares a **testimony** of how family worship impacted his daughter. *Let's listen in.* [2:56-5:15
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9SUYzSLmrE>]
- h. Alright, just to recap, if you're **new to family worship** and you're looking for a **place to start**, Phase #1 is simply to read Scripture.
- i. Now if you've already begun reading Scripture and you're **up for the challenge**, I would encourage you to consider entering into...

6. Phase #2: *Reading & Discussing* Scripture

- a. Here you're still reading the Bible together, but you're going **one step further** and **discussing** it as a family.
- b. A lot of the time this might just **happen naturally**. Kids may ask questions. Difficulties might arise in a given passage that **pique** someone's **curiosity**. That's great.
- c. But **the reality** is that it's very difficult to come up with good discussion questions **on the fly**.
- d. Which is why I've printed out a little **laminated bookmark** for each family to take home. There should be at least **one for each household**.
- e. There are **two sides** to the bookmark. The first side contains **prayer prompts**; we'll get back to that in a moment. The **flipside** has a list of **Bible discussion questions** on it. So, let's take a look at that.
- f. I've divided this up into **four categories**.

- g. **First**, I've included a few **conversation starters** that you can ask your kids around the dinner table or when you're just hanging out in order to **get a gage** for how they're doing and **go beneath the surface**.
- h. The **next three categories** are discussion questions you might ask your kids after you read Scripture. The nice thing about these is that they can **apply to any passage** in the Bible, so you can use them **day after day**.
- i. So, there's a list of questions that you can ask **preschool children** after reading a Bible story.
 - i. These are mostly **comprehension questions**.
 - ii. Little kids are very **concrete thinkers**.
 - iii. They will be able to engage the Bible in terms of **what people did** in the story and **how they felt**.
 - iv. You may want to conclude the conversation with a **one-sentence summary** of how they can **apply** this passage to their lives.
- j. Then there are some questions for **elementary-age children**. Here you can start to ask questions that involve **more processing**.
 - i. Like what does this passage say about God? About ourselves? About Christ? About what God desires from us?
- k. Finally, I've included **two alternative methods** for discussing the Bible with older children, say, **middle school and up**.
 - i. The first is the so-called "**COMA**" **method**, not that it **puts kids to sleep**—although there are times when that might be desirable—but because it involves asking questions about Context, Observation, Meaning, and Application.
 - 1. Personally, I **love this method**. I've used it in Bible studies and small groups and Sunday school classes.

- ii. And then there's the **David Helm model**, where you're asking kids to come up with a **light bulb**, a **question mark**, and an **arrow**.
 1. The important thing to note here is that you don't need to be an expert or a **seminary grad** to use these methods!
 2. In fact, if your kid asks a hard question, you can get into the habit of **opening up the question** to the **entire family**, and making it a **rule of thumb** that you will look for the answer in the words of the passage itself.
 3. It's truly amazing how many hard Bible questions can be answered just by re-reading and digesting the passage.
 4. And at the end of the day, if you **don't know the answers**, that's okay. **Jot them down**. Do some research. Ask Pastor Zach or another trusted leader.
 5. Again, as **Jerrad Lopes** writes, in order to lead your family in worship, you don't need to be *the expert*; you just need to be the *lead learner*.
- iii. Now whenever we're reading the Bible, whether individually or as families, it's important not to **bypass that final question**, "How does this passage apply to your life?"
 1. One of the goals of Scripture-reading is **comprehension**, but if we stop there, we might raise children whose **heads are filled** with knowledge but whose **hearts are far** from God.
 2. Jesus said in Luke 11:28: "Blessed...are those who hear the word of God and *keep* it!"
 3. He said in Matthew 7 that those who hear and *do* his words will be like a man who built his house on the rock.

4. If you really want to have the **blessing of God upon your family**, if you really want to establish a house **built on the rock** that is unshakeable by the storms and trials of life, don't just read the Word, but put it into practice.
 5. As the Word is convicting you, confess your sins to your family and repent. Stop from time to time to consider with your kids how you might **translate** what you're reading into **everyday life**.
- l. So those are some questions you might want to use to discuss **any given passage** in Scripture.
 - m. But let's say you're **looking for resources** that will give you more **specific discussion questions** that are **tailored to each individual Bible passage**.
 - i. This is where **devo's** come in really handy.
 - ii. There are a few **Bible-centered** devo's out there that provide brief comments and discussion questions for specific passages.
 - iii. I've listed them for you on the **orange handout**. I'll **mention just two**.
 - iv. First are these little "**Devotional Dippers**."
 1. Maybe you're in **between biblical books** or you're on the go and you only have a **couple of minutes**.
 2. Well, you can reach into the little tube here and draw out a "**devotional dipper**" that has a theme, a Bible passage, a discussion question, and a prayer point.
 3. There are **40 dippers** in each tube and there are **five different tubes** that have been published, each with a different topic like prayer, Christmas, wisdom, etc.

- v. And then a second Bible-centered devotional resource would be **Marty Machowski's** volumes *Long Story Short* and *Old Story New*, which are meant to be a companion to the Old and New Testaments, **respectively**.
 - 1. These are **wonderful books** that provide short reflections on most of the **stories of the Bible** together with **discussion questions** and ideas for **prayer**.
- n. Speaking of prayer, I invite you to turn to the **other side** of this green **bookmark**.
 - i. So as not to **steal thunder** from our **next session**, we won't **linger here** very long, but once you're done reading and discussing the Bible and it comes time to pray, sometimes it's really hard to know what to pray about.
 - ii. And if your family is anything like mine, you get into a **rut**, and Dad starts to **drone on** about the same three topics he always prays about.
 - iii. Well, that's why I've given you a **long list** of things you might pray about on a **regular basis**.
 - iv. I've organized them around the **famous prayer acronym** ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.
 - 1. Little ones might learn them as "You are Great," "I'm Sorry," "Thank You," and "Please" prayers.
 - 2. Under each heading I've given you prompts or ideas of what you might pray about if you get stuck.
 - v. But the method I'd really like to **commend** is to *allow the Bible passage you've just read to **guide** and **inspire** your prayers*.
 - vi. So, under **each letter** in the acronym, I've **italicized** and **starred** a question to help you convert what you've learned in a passage into a prayer.

- vii. So, imagine you've just read the **parable of the Prodigal Son** together as a family. You might praise and thank God for being a **compassionate Father**, pray for forgiveness for all the times you've **run away** from Him, and ask that He would help you to not be like the big brother who is self-righteous.
- viii. But now we're **getting ahead of ourselves**. More on this in our **next session**.
- o. **To summarize** once again: Once you've gotten into the **rhythm** and **routine** of reading Scripture, the **natural next step** is to start **discussing** it as a family.
- p. But let's say you've already started doing that, or the **appetite is there** and you're looking for ways to **supplement** what you're doing in family worship. In that case, let's consider lastly...

7. Phase #3: *Reading, Discussing, & Teaching Scripture*

- a. Now, of course, there's **lots of teaching** going on when you're just reading and discussing. But if you want to **dig deeper**, here are three ideas for how you can do so:
- b. **First**, you could help your children *memorize the Scripture*.
 - i. The **psalmist** cries out, "I have **hidden** your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you!"
 - ii. And there are many tools out there to help your children **hide** and **treasure** God's word in their heart.
 - iii. For **littles**, there are a couple of "**ABC Bible Verse**" books that I've cited on the handout that are tremendous.
 - iv. There are "**Seeds Family Worship**" videos on **CD's** and for **free on various streaming services** that set dozens and dozens of verses to music, and they're usually pretty high quality.

1. They're great for putting on **in the car** or at **bedtime** or even **in the background** while you're **hanging out at home**.
- v. You might consider having a **theme verse** for the week that you **put on the mirror** in the bathroom or on the fridge that you're trying to memorize and live out as a family.
- vi. However you go about it, just consider that if your child memorized just **one verse a month** for fifteen years, they would have **180 verses memorized** by the time they leave your house!
- c. In the **second place**, you might begin *teaching theology* to your children.
 - i. It's one thing to learn Bible stories or Bible passages. It's another thing to be able to **synthesize** and **systematize** the teachings of the Bible so that they're clear in your mind.
 - ii. That's what theology is for, and there are a number of excellent resources out there along these lines; they're all listed for you on the **handout**.
 - iii. For kids age 3-10 or so, I want to **highlight** the **three-volume** set *Little Pilgrim's Progress*.
 1. This is a beautifully-illustrated paraphrase of John Bunyan's spiritual classic.
 2. The kids and I read a chapter in one of these books almost **every night before they go to bed**. They're just **mesmerized** by them.
 3. And the amazing thing about these books is that they're an **allegory** for the entire Christian life. So, they give you a set of **common categories** and **vocabulary** to use with your kids in **everyday conversation** and in prayer.

4. We hardly go a day in our house without talking about what it means to **stay on the king's path** to the heavenly city, listening to the king's word, and so forth.
- iv. Another great read is **Marty Machowky's** cleverly-titled ***The Ology***, which makes theology simple for kids to understand.
- d. **Third and finally**, you and your children could start *learning a catechism*.
 - i. Remember back in Deuteronomy 6, the passage we read earlier, how there's this conversation, this **question-and-answer session** that takes place between parent and child? And Moses instructs parents how to summarize **big biblical truths in a few words**.
 - ii. The Scripture is full of little **creeds** and **catechisms** like this, which goes to show why learning a catechism can be such a powerful way to learn God's Word.
 - iii. Sometimes the Bible feels like this **labyrinth**, this big **maze**, and it's easy to **get lost** in the **enormity** of it. Well, the catechism provides a **roadmap** or **compass** to help kids on their quest through the Bible.
 - iv. So, I've listed on the **handout** a number of catechisms that express our church's theology.
 - v. One such catechism is called the **New City Catechism**. It's great for kids of all ages. Please note **on your way out** that there are many copies up here **on the table** that you can **take for free**.
 - vi. Finally, there's what's called **the First Catechism**, which is the catechism that our **K through 5th graders** are learning in **Quest**.
 - vii. **Emily** is going to share a bit more about the resources that are available to help you go through the First Catechism with your kids.

8. Take-Home Challenge (12:45-12:47)

- a. As we've done in **previous sessions**, I want to **close out our time** by issuing a **take-home challenge**.
- b. The question I want to leave you with is this: *What's one small step of obedience you take in response to you've learned this afternoon?*
- c. If you're a beginner at family worship, maybe that's **stepping** into **phase one** and establishing a set time in your routine where you *read* the Bible with your children, even if that's just **5-10 minutes at a crack**.
- d. If you're already actively engaged in Bible-reading with your family, maybe it's **moving into phase two**, where you're more intentional about generating *discussion* around the Word.
- e. Or maybe it's something from **phase 3**—picking up some solid theological resources to help shape your kids' minds, starting to work through a catechism.
- f. We learn how to **walk spiritually** just like we learn how to **walk physically**.
 - i. **Small, baby steps** of obedience.
 - ii. It's not about *perfection*; it's about *direction*.
- g. So, *what's that small step for you and your family?* **Think** about it. **Pray** about it.
- h. And as you do so, remember where we **started this journey** back in **October...with God's grace**.
 - i. No matter what your **failures** in **the past**,
 - ii. No matter what your **struggles** in **the present**,
 - iii. No matter what your **worries** are about **the future**,
 - iv. God's grace **washes** over it all and **overflows** into the lives of our children.

9. Closing Prayer (12:47-12:48)

- a. As you head out, feel free to **peruse the resource table**, and mark down **February 25th** for our next gathering!