

How to Have A Family Altar

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CHAPTER TWELVE

The Family Altar and Obedient Children

THE AIM OF EVERY PARENT is to guide the children into a full and well-rounded life. We place great stress on rearing obedient children because obedience is the key to character. A child may be saved as early as the age of three years, but if he isn't taught obedience during his early years, how will he know the meaning of JESUS' words, "**Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you**"?

The Saviourhood of CHRIST may well be revealed to the child in the instructions of the family altar, and through this the child should learn to trust CHRIST as Saviour; but the meaning of the Lordship of CHRIST will be largely taught the child in the everyday situations of the home; here he will learn to obey CHRIST immediately, earnestly, and completely.

Here are a few vital points which will aid parents in developing an obedient spirit in their children. The problem of gaining obedience from children depends upon what the parent is and does. The child's conscience will never direct him to be obedient to a parent he cannot respect. Nor will he feel inclined to deny himself his will if he observes his parents living self-indulgent, undisciplined lives.

If the parent is what he should be, he will win the conscience of the child to his side. If the parent does as he should, he will finally win the will of the child to his side. The parent will never win the will of the child without first winning his conscience. Parents owe the children the example of a holy life.

Concerning the lives of young wives GOD has said:

"Teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:4, 5).

1. Parents must be obedient to GOD. If they are not, how can they rear obedient children? Obedience is first of all a spirit, an attitude of heart, will, and mind. It is not so much learned by the words the child hears with his ears as it is caught by the example he sees with his eyes. Parents who are "**followers of God as dear children**" will show the spirit of obedience, self-denial, and discipline.

The point we are making is that parents must give a lively obedience to GOD before they can expect to rear obedient children. So the vital question for every parent is whether he has yielded himself absolutely for GOD to use as He will. If the answer is Yes, he will be able to direct the

feet of his children in self-denial and obedience.

A wise old writer said: "Someone is reported to have put a question to the celebrated George Whitfield concerning the piety of one of his friends: 'Mr. So-and-So is a very pious man. Do you think so?' 'I am sure I cannot say, sir, as I have never lived with him.'"

A religion that does not discover itself in our home life has surely no right at all to the name of the religion of JESUS.

In Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Charity finds Christian journeying alone to the Celestial City. She asks Christian, "Why did you not bring your family with you? You should have talked to them, and shown them the danger of being left behind."

"So I did," answered Christian, "but I seemed to them as one that mocked, and they believed me not."

"But," said Charity, "did you not with your vain life damp all persuasion of your words?"

So much is said in the Word of GOD about the home life. "**Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord... Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it**" (Ephesians 5:22, 25). "**Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.**" "**Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.**" "**Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ... And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in Heaven.**"

The strongest Christian man needs here to put forth all his strength, or he must "**fall into reproach and the snare of the devil**" at home.

If we "**put on the whole armour of God**" we cannot fail. No weapon can get through the joints of this harness. We may have still to fight our very hardest against the foe at home; but GOD thus helping us, we "**shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.**"

Let us never take off GOD's armor. Let those who see the most of us, see the best of us. Whenever we come home, let it be to "bless our household" and scatter sunlight on all about us. The Lord will then "**create upon [our] dwelling place... a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defense**" (Isaiah 4:5).

2. Prayer and power go together. The battle for obedient children is really won or lost in the hidden places of prayer. I think of that great mother of prayer and faith in the Gospels, that nameless woman called "**a woman from Canaan.**" Her daughter must have been a terrible problem child, for she said, "**My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.**"

Finally she left her daughter alone and brought the problem straight to JESUS. Sometimes it is better to talk to JESUS about the disobedient boy or girl than it is to talk to them about JESUS. She was severely tested by the Saviour before the answer was given to her prayers.

In this story we have revealed the providential pattern of the various kinds of testings GOD sends to praying souls. If you will look carefully you will take new heart and courage.

Notice the tests: His silence - "**But he answered her not a word.**" Opposition of flesh, the world and the devil. "**Send her away; for she crieth after us.**" His rebuff: "**But he answered and said, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**" His humiliation of her: "**It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.**"

If you are a praying mother or father, you can classify nearly all your testing and trials in some one or other of those four main kinds of providential testings.

This mother stood up under all the four testings and persevered until her daughter was made whole. "**Then came she and worshipped him.**"

She didn't get her mind on herself in self-pity, but she exalted Him. GOD aims that we should keep our eyes on CHRIST and magnify Him; then He knows we will grow in grace and will perfect our faith and bring great glory to CHRIST.

And if we will do this, we can persevere through any trial until He grants the answer to our prayer. The second key to victory while under testings is given in verse 27, after she had just been tested by great humiliation. She said, "**Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.**" Then He said, "**O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour**" (v. 28).

Any parent can win the release of his children from the power of the devil if he will pay the price in prayer and perseverance.

3. The Word of GOD must have its rightful place. Not only must parents be obedient and prayerful, but they need to be immersed in the Word of GOD. There is something in GOD's Word to cover every situation and every need.

4. There must be right parental motivation. Many parents are just plain selfish. They use their children for their own satisfaction. The child must be taught to be obedient because it is right and because it is pleasing to CHRIST. The family altar helps to keep this motive clearly in view and provides a means of putting it into effect.

We repeat again, "For Christ's sake" must be the parents' supreme motive in asking obedience from their children. The day will come when your motive for asking obedience will become their inward motive for giving it. In this way your child will learn the meaning of the Lordship of CHRIST.

5. Parents must maintain a right attitude. They must give orders and correct in a quiet manner.

They must not criticize, in the hearing of the child, representatives of authority. For if the parents make an attack upon some representative of authority - whether by one parent criticizing the other or both parents siding with the child against the teacher, or father blasting the nation, or

mother slurring and criticizing the pastor - the fabric of obedience is weakened in the child's mind and the value of authority is undermined for him.

Criticism of the pastor can destroy, for the child, the authority of all that the pastor symbolizes.

Criticism of the government can destroy his respect for the law and authority of the nation.

Criticism of one parent by the other destroys the child's respect for the person and the authority of both parents.

6. Parents must be zealous to win their child's soul to CHRIST. If your child is brought up around the family altar from the very earliest days, it will not be hard to win him to CHRIST at a very tender age. The second name a child should learn to speak after mother and father is the saving name of JESUS.

If the Word is faithfully given, the HOLY SPIRIT can create saving faith in a little heart at a very tender age. Recently I saw a little boy of two and a half years who is gloriously saved and knows it.

~ end of chapter 12 ~
