

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

From The Editor's Desk.

All of us no doubt are aware of the need and importance of individual worship for the growth and maintenance of our relationship with God, equally important is the matter of family worship. Proverbs 22:6 reminds us to: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Family worship and individual worship are included in this and perhaps all Christians should also apply this verse in training themselves in the way they should go so that they will not depart from it either as they grow older. To win a race no athlete ever stops training and brothers and sisters, we do have a race set before us. [see Hebrews 12:1]

A series of four short, but pertinent, articles from various writers will be presented in the next four issues to assist us in this area. The first article is titled: *Family Worship – An Essential For the Christian Family*, second: *The Importance of Family Worship*, third: *Meaningful Family Worship* and fourth: *Tests of Family Worship*

May they be a blessing to you as you 'run to obtain the prize' [1 Corinthians 9:24]

A few minor changes have been made for the coming year. The border on the front page will continue for the coming year and is **blue** so that it may remind us of the truths taught in the article entitled "**The Ribband of Blue** Principle in the New Testament" published in the May 2007 issue.

The section titled "Snippets" has been replaced by a section titled "Snapshots" which will contain brief excerpts from various Anabaptist publications and other historical records to give us an insight as to how those believers who have gone on to their eternal rest lived out their lives in obedience to the Gospel. It is our prayer that they may be an encouragement to us as well as giving us valuable insight as to how they grasped the meaning of scriptures and applied it to their daily lives. *JvL.*

MINISTER'S CORNER.**The Blessing of An Eternal Perspective.**

Bro. J.P.Hursh, Valley View Mennonite Church PA.

It is interesting to notice the change in the life of Paul. We begin with Paul pursuing his own agenda and looking for others to support him. We later find him going in and out among God's people. That is one of the changes that comes with conversion. We surrender our identity and in a sense lose our identity in Christ and in the body of believers.

In Luke 6 we have, I suppose, what we call a parallel passage to the Sermon on the Mount. We assume that it is the same occasion that is being recorded coming from a different writer with a little bit of a different perspective. Of course, it is a different wording, and it is not quite as detailed as the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. Notice the word "now," is used in verse 21, "Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh." It emphasizes the present against the future. We could say it contrasts that.

A part of Christian experience and Christian hope is that we relate the present to the future. The present issues into the future. If we focus on the present and it is about as big as our circle goes, we only see the present. We will act and choose differently, however, if we have this eternal perspective — that what is present — what we see, hear, feel, and experience is temporary and will issue into something — then we choose accordingly. It helps us to relate to the "here-and- now." Luke 6:20–26, "And he lifted up His eyes on His disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. (21) Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. (22) Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. (23) Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. (24) But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. (25) Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! For ye shall mourn and weep. (26) Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

It is interesting sometimes in life as we think of the Beatitudes, and the blessedness that comes. There are certain things that we can do, certain attitudes that we are called to have, and certain ways that we relate and respond that Jesus says will bring a blessing. Therefore, when we want a blessing we live accordingly. Then the blessing comes. Maybe in between the times that we do not quite measure up then we miss the blessing. While that is partly true, we may subconsciously develop, or perceive, a neutral in life. Thus, if I am not living up to the blessedness that is promised here then I missed the blessing and it is simply kind of neutral. Here it impressed me how that after Jesus gives these “blesseds” then He turns around and comes across the same line again and says “woe.” Thus, there is no neutral ground. It is said that the Beatitudes are the gateway to blessedness. There is another gateway that is opened here too, to that of woe and damnation. Let us notice a few of these beatitudes and comment a bit. Verse 21 speaks of the weeping. I thought of the verse in the Scriptures that says, “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5). Our perspective is that we are not overly burdened by the weeping we experience now, but we know that it is a light affliction. Verse 22 is one that we probably can all identify with. Toward the end of the verse it says, “when men . . . reproach you, and cast out your name as evil.” We all are concerned about our reputation.

We know that character is more important than reputation. Nevertheless, regardless of my character I am also concerned about my reputation. If men cast out your name as evil, it does not feel good. It is not fair. It is not just. There is something in us that rises up and we might say that: “You can do a lot of other things to me, but do not mar my name, or cast out my name for evil.” We are quite self-protective of that. It is right that we are concerned about our reputation. “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches” (Proverbs 22:1). It is important that we are concerned about the name that we have. However, Jesus says that when people do this unjustly “for the Son of man’s sake” — when this happens to us because we are living for Christ and doing what is right then “rejoice in that day.” Rejoice in the day that your name is counted evil of. Why do we rejoice? It is because of verse 23. “For, behold, your reward is great in heaven.” Do we have an eternal perspective as strongly as we ought to have, that we can bear some of these injustices and go on without it unduly affecting us?

In verse 24 we switch to the woes. There is no neutral ground. We have started out in verse 20 with “Blessed be ye poor.” Now in verse 24 “woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.” We, in our lives of affluence, very potentially are caught in this woe. There is a snare that goes with abundance. Verse 25 says, “Woe unto you that are full!” In a temporal sense we are rich and we are full, and it is a very potential snare. I thought of the verse in Revelation to the church of Laodicea where they said, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ” (Revelation 3:17). A woe was pronounced on them. The end of verse 25 says, “Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.” I thought again of the expression of the Scriptures of “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine” (Proverbs 17:22). There is a place for joy, merriness, and laughter but in a very careful way. This can easily issue into excesses. I think that is what is in focus here — those who are excessive in the laughter. Maybe we would think of the entertainment that society offers and those who are caught up in this shall mourn and weep. Let us be careful.

Maybe this would be a special appeal to youth. We think of youth as having a proneness to the frivolity of life because of where they are in life and their inexperience in life. Their perspective of a whole lifetime ahead of them and the strength of the experience can get them caught up in the frivolity. We want to be careful as we enjoy youth, health and boundless energy that we remember that we take an eternal perspective in life.

The last one yet in verse 26 is again very real to all of us. How many of you would prefer to be spoken well of, or have any desire for that? Does it make any difference to you how men talk about you? Or, are you simply living for Christ and you are looking for God’s approval? Is it beside the point what my fellowmen have to say? No, we do not relate that way. “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!” Sometimes we go out of our way or we are especially careful to keep this being well spoken of men. Again, it is a snare. It is proclaimed as a snare and “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!” There were prophets in the Old Testament who were told by their people to “speak unto us smooth things” (Isaiah 30:10). Some fell to that temptation. They spoke those smooth things so that they would be well spoken of. We have come to know that really that is not the best way for one in authority to maintain his respect

— to speak only what his followers want him to say. Parents have learned this too. We like to maintain the good will of our children, and so maybe we step around some issues and sidestep some things that should be addressed because we want to maintain their good will, otherwise, if we have not the goodwill of our children we will lose our effectiveness with them. While there is some truth in that, we need to be careful that we are not emphasizing and focussing on this thing of wanting others to speak well of us, whether parents or church leaders. We need to be careful about being overly concerned about keeping the goodwill of men.

Verse 19 says “the whole multitude sought to touch Him: for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all.” The multitude having seen what Jesus wanted to offer had a desire to touch Him. We know what Jesus has to offer and we desire to touch Him. It is not a once and done thing upon our conversion. We continue to want to touch Jesus and be in touch with Him. May that happen in our worship as the Word is preached that it would be our opportunity to reach out, that Jesus (in a sense) will be passing by in our service. We have the opportunity to reach out and to touch. May we do our part. *Used by permission from: The Pulpit Exchange*

Sowing The Gospel.

Background Scriptures: Matthew 10:1-20; 25:14-30
 Lesson Text: Matthew 13:3-11, 18-23

Jesus used the example of sowing seed to teach a lesson on spreading the seed of the gospel. God desires that His Word be spread and that its work in the heart of man would bring forth a bountiful harvest. He has given to man the duty to sow this seed.

In order for man to be effective in this effort, he must first have the seed sown in his own heart. "The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits" (2 Timothy 2:6). As the seed sown in our hearts comes to fruitage in faithful obedience, we also go forth sowing seed. The call for this work is to all who have allowed the Word to cleanse and regenerate their heart and change their life.

An unbiased vision is necessary for effectiveness when sowing gospel seed. God is no respecter of persons; neither is His servant to be. God offers His Word to all, and it will work for anyone who has a prepared acre. Who knows where those prepared spots are? Since it is not always so evident, the sower needs to spread the seed of the gospel everywhere so that some will come to fruitage.

Key Verse.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you (Hosea 10:12).

Lesson Text.

Matthew 13:3-11, 18-23. "And He spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow, And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

When we think of sowing in Jesus' day, we picture a man carrying a

sack with seed in it. As he walks along, he reaches into the sack and slings the seed out evenly over all the soil from which he hopes to gain a harvest. Along the side of most fields, there is a pathway packed hard from travel. From here, birds can pluck the seed before it has opportunity to sprout. At places the ground is stony, is hard to be tilled, or has shallow topsoil. Because of the shallow soil, the seed may quickly sprout and begin to grow, but the lack of moisture in the stony ground soon starves the plant, and it dies. Even in the ground that appears to be well prepared, hidden weed seeds may be present that sprout and choke out the good plants. As the sower is sowing, some seed falls on each of these conditions in the field. Surely, this is an example of what the sower of the gospel encounters as he goes forth. His concern is that the hearts of the hearers, whatever their condition, be covered sufficiently with the true Word of the gospel. Among all the adverse conditions, there will be some prepared soil that in time will bear the fruit of a spiritual harvest.

Jesus did not indicate that preparation of the field was the duty of the sower. However, there are some factors that are important for the sower to consider. He does not just go out one day and start slinging seed. He spends time familiarizing himself with the seed and its value and is aware that there is a season for sowing. God is the one who prepares the heart through the gentle, timely work of His Holy Spirit. He tenderly invites, showing man his sin and pointing out the judgment that will come on sin. He shows him that he is lost without a Savior. God also points out those who are humbly walking His way and the comfort and security they experience. He shows what joy can be experienced when the godly way is chosen. His desire is that the Spirit's tender work will soften and prepare the heart so when the faithful servant sows the seeds of the gospel, some will fall on prepared soil. He is calling the stony heart and the heart that is filled with the cares of life as well as those who are standing on the way-side of indecision. As He sends His faithful servant to sow, He sends equally to all conditions of the heart.

Practical Truths for Today

The gospel is for all people everywhere. Jesus sent His disciples into the world to sow the seed. He sent them to all races and creeds of people, to the downtrodden, to those in prison, to those who are homeless, destitute, and without hope, to those not open to the truth because of other religious persuasions, and to those open to hear. The sower did not avoid any area of

the field where he thought the prospect of harvest was less, but he sowed the seed on all of it.

Man's tendency is to spend more effort where he thinks there is more worthiness. But salvation is open to all, and God loves those who seem less worthy or less receptive just as much as those whom man tends to judge as more worthy or more receptive. The love of the sower servant is manifest in that he, like God, makes no distinction about status when sowing the seed. He faithfully toils wherever the Master Sower sends him.

To be ready for that small task God has for us, we must be first partakers of that experience of which we are to speak. It is not enough to once have met the Lord; it takes a continual walking with Him. Personal devotion to God is vitally important. This preparation establishes the environment for warm and effective family devotions. For most of us, our first responsibility is to sow the seed in our own home. This faithful work of humility then reaches out beyond our own small circle and touches others we know. A humble spirit gives us the vision that all men are worthy and enables us to reach out to anyone, whoever or wherever he is.

Unless we have this vision, our efforts will not be as fruitful as they could be. When we have agendas of our own and our lives are not fully submitted to God, we pursue our own desires and fail in the work God has for us. God needs a complete surrender from the servant He sends to sow the seed. He knows the season and the condition of the hearts of all men and knows when the time is right for seed to be sown. We cannot see those things as God does, and therefore we need to follow faithfully and carefully as He leads.

We should not think of probable results (or the lack of them) to determine whether or not we will share God's message. The work of saving souls is the Lord's, and the whole-hearted, unconditional efforts we put forth to spread the Word will not go unrewarded. We may never know what our efforts have accomplished, but if there are those who are saved by the love of God manifest in our lives, whatever we were caused to endure in that work will not be regretted. Surely the more we reach out; there will be greater probability of the seed finding a prepared spot. As we go forth, let us not neglect the prisons, rescue missions, hospitals, and nursing homes. May we share God's message with the poor, the handicapped and maimed, the mentally and physically distressed. The list of opportunities is endless, and God needs available servants.

Points to Ponder.

- [1] If bearing fruit is dependent on proper preparation, what can we do to prepare our hearts so the good seed will sprout and grow?
- [2] We often hear, "If I only knew it was God asking this work of me, I would not hesitate." How can there be clearer direction? Is the lack of clarity a result of our own reasoning?
- [3] Do we have any part in helping to prepare the hearts where the gospel is to be sown, or is this God's work?
- [4] It has been said that God is not looking for ability but for availability. Should we ask ourselves, "Am I available?"

*Used by permission from Sunday School Lessons,
Gospel Publishers, Moundridge, Kansas.*

SNAPSHOTS.

Brief excerpts from various Anabaptist publications.

An extract from "The Martyrs Mirror."

WHAT TESTIMONY THY HOLY APOSTLES HAVE GIVEN IN THEIR EPISTLES, CONCERNING BAPTISM

[1] That it signifies the burying of sins, and the resurrection into a new life.

Rom. 6:3-4, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death. Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*

NOTE.-To the foregoing belongs also the passage, Tit. 3:5, where baptism is called, "the washing of regeneration," and Eph. 5:26, "the washing of water by the word."

[2] That through faith we become children of God, and through baptism put on Christ. **

Gal. 3:26-27, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

[3] That as the ark with eight souls was preserved in the water, so also believing baptized Christians are preserved or saved in baptism through the answer of a good conscience.

1 Pet. 3:20-21, "When once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.*** The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)."

MOREOVER, THE CONDITIONS REQUIRED IN, AT, AND ABOUT BAPTISM, INDICATE SUFFICIENTLY THAT IT WAS NOT ADMINISTERED TO CHILDREN, BUT TO PERSONS OF UNDERSTANDING

In order to receive baptism in a worthy and true manner, there are required sorrow and repentance of sins, accompanied with a confession of the same. Matt. 3:6, we read, "And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."

Besides this, it is required that we should bear good fruits. "Bring forth therefore," says John, to those who desired to be baptized, "fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:8); or, according to Biestken's translation, "Do genuine fruits of repentance."

Mark 16:16, it is also required, that we believe, yea, that we believe with the hearts. Acts 8:37.

In short, repentance or conversion, and baptism are joined together, Matt. 3:6, 11; as also, teaching, believing, and baptizing, Mark 16:15-16. Confession and baptism went hand in hand with the Ethiopian, Acts 8:37. Baptism is a burying of the old man, and a sign of resurrection into a new life, Rom. 6:3-4; a putting on of Christ, Gal. 3:27; and the answer of a good conscience toward God. 1 Pet. 3:21

** He that is to have his son buried through baptism, must first have died unto it through repentance: and he that is to rise into, or walk in the new life must first have been or walked in an old life; this is incontrovertible, but whether it applies to infants, let the reader judge.*

*** It appears, therefore, that none were baptized in Galatia, but those who had put on Christ. Concerning this putting on of Christ, see Rom. 13:14.*

**** In the ark, which was preserved through, or, properly speaking, in the water, there were none but believing and obedient persons, eight in num-*

ber, namely, Noah and his wife, with their three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their three wives, eight persons in all: likewise, none but believing and obedient persons belong in the church of Christ, which is compared to the ark, and which must be preserved through or in baptism.

These and other conditions required in baptism cannot exist in infants, who know neither good nor evil, cannot discern between the right hand and the left hand, and do as children do, Deut. 1:39; John. 4:11; I Cor. 13:11.

Here we might adduce much more, but since it is not our purpose to dispute about this point, but simply to show from the unadorned testimonies of the holy evangelists and apostles, that baptism was administered in the first century only to adult (that is, penitent and believing) persons, we shall leave this subject, and proceed to give an account of those who, according to history, have, either by word or by deed, maintained this doctrine.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

John Jost, Renton Washington.

What does home mean to you? I'm sure there are different concepts of what home is or should be. What we are really interested in is God's plan for our homes. To some people, home is simply a place to reside. As we think of a young couple getting married and starting a home, we know that it is important that they invite God to dwell with them at all times. Sometime we say that a threefold cord cannot be broken. We know that a threefold cord is stronger than a twofold cord. This would be the burden of my concern. There is a song that says the family that prays together shall never be parted.

What is it that draws us together? A painter was once asked to draw a picture of peace, love, and faith. So he asked a soldier what peace was, and the soldier told him it was a place where there was no strife. It is when one can accept other thoughts and ideas with consideration, and then try to work out an agreeable solution.

The painter asked a teacher, "What is love?" The teacher said that it is

that which is in our hearts that wants to please the person we love. For a young bride or groom, it will include affection for each other. For a Christian, it is to love God more than anything in this world. It is that virtue that easily forgives and is willing to share with those in need.

The painter then asked a minister, "What is faith?" The minister said that faith is believing that God's Word is the truth. Faith is having confidence in one another. Faith will always accept another's word as truth until it is proven differently.

So this painter was having a difficult time deciding what picture would portray such a scene. It was not until he walked into a Christian home that he knew what to paint. As he walked in, he saw children playing on the floor, enjoying one another. They were content with what they were doing because they felt secure in their home. The painter saw their mother working, giving herself for the welfare of her family. Soon father walked in from work, and the family gathered around to share the events of the day. The painter saw the children as a picture of peace, the mother as a picture of love, and the father as one in whom they all had faith. So he said, "I will paint a picture of a home."

I would like to write a little about love. It has been said that love energizes faith. We also have that scripture that talks about "faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). And when faith and love are properly exercised, they will produce peace. We have that song that says "love will bring us all together." That is so true. I would like to suggest that we sit down and read the song, "Love at Home," (No.220 Church Hymnal) and notice the words. They probably could do as much as what I'm trying to bring to you in this writing. The first verse says that there is beauty all around when there's love at home. There is joy in every sound when there's love at home. Time doth softly sweetly glide when there's love at home.

Isn't that a beautiful picture? My concern is that the beauty of a Christian home will not be lost with the busy schedule of life. The moulding and shaping of our children starts at a very young age. Someone has likened it to when we pour concrete. In the beginning, it is very soft, but if you wait too long, it will harden, and time and opportunity to shape it are lost.

Good teaching and example will establish a good conscience in children. Many things are caught easier than taught. When we think of children receiving something, it needs to be implanted in their hearts. The Bible says to train up a child when he or she is young, and when they are older, they

will not depart from it. When children can see a sincere and genuine example that they admire, it will generally bring good results. In order for parents to be faithful, they must see the importance of training their children in the right way. Recently we have heard the concern of missionaries bonding with the people they are working with. This must begin at home with our children.

If our children can bond with us as parents, we will have a greater influence on their lives. Working together with our children is a great advantage in establishing a good relationship with them. The trend is for the youth to work out and receive a good wage. This may have some value in material gain, but does it leave us short-changed on eternal values?

What can we do to bond together? Here's where we may have a difference in opinion. We all know that "all work makes Jack a dull boy." If, while the children are yet small, they can learn responsibility, they are more apt to develop good character. To bond together, we need to stay together in everything we do. When children are small, this could include playing, reading, singing, talking, praying, working, and many other activities. In order to bond together in these small things, we must find enjoyment in doing them. If we only do them because we feel like we have to, it won't work.

Then as children get older, they can appreciate the confidence everyone has toward one another and in God. Many times adversity can bring us together if we can accept our lot in life. We don't necessarily like adversity, but it can make us stronger. A life without any adversity is like a tree that has never experienced any wind. It will not be able to take a storm like the person who has experienced adversity. Adverse times can build faith in God as we apply ourselves together. As we have faith in one another, faith in God is promoted.

If we have established a good Christian home, we will have a hope of an eternal home. We say that "home is where the heart is." The question might be, "Where is the affection of our heart?" Is our primary goal that eternal home?

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Family Worship – Article 1 **An Essential for the Christian Family**

What do we have as a basis for family worship? Does the Bible say we should bring our families together each day for a period of worship? No, but there is certainly a Biblical basis for family worship. The Scriptures that direct us to public assembly can be just as well applied to family worship. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25). "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another" (Malachi 3:16). What better book of remembrance can be written than about our family worship?

True worship is not a matter of obeying a command, but rather the response of a heart devoted to God. Worship is an attitude, a feeling of reverence, admiration, and profound respect. It is the condition of the soul that brings forth the fruit of praise, prayer, and the desire to know more of the One we are devoted to.

Worship is not a remote experience, but rather one that affects all of life, which is highlighted by times of special devotion and concentration. With worship being such a part of the individual, he then desires to involve those around him in worship also, so that they might set their hope in God. This does not mean that worship is spontaneous. It takes effort to worship. Worship calls for time and sacrifice.

Abraham is a good example of such a person. As we view the life of Abraham, we see that devotion to God was very important to him. It is stated that where he pitched his tent, there he built an altar. The result of such devotion is that the Lord knew he would command his household and his children after him (Genesis 18:19). It is evident that the family was involved because Isaac was acquainted with worship and knew what was needed for worship. As they proceeded to Mount Moriah, he recognized that they had the needed fire and wood, but no lamb for the sacrifice.

Abraham's altars stood before his household as a reminder of an experience with God. Family worship is needed to give us and our children a frame of reference through the day. As Abraham's servant met the task of

finding a wife for Isaac, his mind turned to God for direction. I believe we can safely assume that it was due to his being involved with Abraham in worship and seeing Abraham's devotion.

The Israelites were commanded to teach statutes and judgments to their children continually (Deuteronomy 6:6-9) For us to get this accomplished. there must be a set period to shut out material things and to direct our minds toward God and His Word. This helps us to think and speak of God throughout the day.

We need family worship to develop the faith of our children. We live in territory not congenial to developing faith. We work with and think about tangible things so much that we lose sight of faith unless we renew our hold on God daily. Only as our children see us depending on God will they come to appreciate the faith.

We need family worship to establish right priorities. Do our children sense as much enthusiasm in us for God as our material pursuits? Much of our time needs to be used in natural things. Unless we turn our attention to God and lay aside all else, we will forget about God as the Giver and neglect thankfulness.

Family worship must begin with the establishment of each new home. It must become a set part of the home schedule before the pressures and duties of life multiply. It should become such a fixed habit that something seems missing if it is neglected. The good and legitimate things of life tend to put pressure on the schedule. The devotional period becomes too short and too hurried. All too soon school bus time arrives. Which do we need to neglect, food for the soul or food for the body?

We must not neglect either, but rather adjust our duties so that there is time for both. When there are teenagers going off to other jobs, more pressure is put on the devotional time. It may be necessary to move devotions to another time of the day, but don't neglect it. Satan will seize the opportunity to have us neglect devotions if we do not have a set time each day. We need to seek to have all family members present. Activities must be planned with family worship in mind.

What should family worship involve? The minimum is Bible reading and prayer. Singing and explaining the Scriptures are good exercises. Devotional books and Bible stories may have their place along with Scripture reading, but not as a substitute. One family uses Scripture reading in the morning and Bible stories in the evening as bedtime stories. This gives children a good understanding of Bible facts. Silent prayer can be used as there are personal burdens to be taken to God. Audible prayer should be used sometimes to help children learn to pray. It is also a good way to share prayer concerns and burdens.

Family worship should be a means of teaching our children proper conduct in worship. Quietness, reverence for God, and respect for His Word should be instilled in children. Long before school age, children should understand that eyes must be kept shut during prayer. All else that a child holds dear must be laid aside so that attention can be focused solely on God and His Word, This may even be a problem for us as adults as we need to deal with distractions of our minds, To help concentration, each family member who can read ought to have a Bible to follow along. Another help would be taking turns reading or expecting others to complete the verse that is being read, Care needs to be exercised that this does not cause disorder.

What results can we expect from meaningful family worship? It will help to unite the family in peace and harmony. It will help us to develop a consciousness of the reality of God, His presence, and His all-seeing eye, it will be a deterrent to evil thoughts and conduct. It will give a good foundation from which to teach throughout the day. As children sense that worship is a part of father and mother it will help them to set their hope in God.

We have a rich heritage to pass on. The material inheritance will be passed on at our decease and only last for time. Our spiritual heritage must be passed on while we live by a continual devotion to God, but it will last into eternity.

—Ivan M. Eby *“The Brotherhood Builder,” October 1994*

Gaining Inspiration From Old Testament Worship (Part 1)

Burning Our Incense

Jonathan Erb Deer Park, WA

Offering incense was an important part of Old Testament worship. The priests made this heavily fragrant offering of incense twice daily—once in the morning and again in the evening. Envision this being practiced for hundreds of years—including the day Zacharias, while he was burning incense (Luke 1:9), received the news of the coming birth of John the Baptist.

The priest went out to the brazen altar in the courtyard and put a few hot coals into his censer. Then he carried them inside to the small altar of incense and sprinkled the incense mixture over the coals as they lay on the altar. Sometimes the incense was sprinkled into the censer itself so that it could be carried elsewhere.

On the Day of Atonement, God commanded that incense be burned in the most holy place. The smoke of this burning mingled with the cloud above the mercy seat. While the high priest did his work in the most holy place, the congregation of Israel assembled in the courtyard outside, their prayers ascending with the smoke of the incense.

David likened prayer to incense. "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Psalm 141:2). Revelation 5:8 and 8:3, 4 speak of incense in the heavenly temple. Here again it is identified with the prayers of the saints.

The use of incense in Old Testament worship suggests how prayer is to be cultivated in the life of the Christian. Prayer, like the incense of an offering, should be offered at distinct, definite times and then smolder with lingering aroma all day long. "Pray without ceasing."

The fire on the altar of incense in the tabernacle was fired by the great altar of sacrifice in the court. So it is with prayer. Our prayers are cool, our incense unused, and God knows no sweet odors until our hearts know forgiveness through the Great Sacrifice, Jesus Christ.

As the fire burned, the smoke rose to the loftiest point possible, a visible reminder that this sweet odor was for God above. While it is entirely proper that we petition God to reach down and aid us in our problems, prayers should include worshipful aspiration that lifts our souls toward Him and exalts His greatness. In our prayers we should reach as high as we

can in aspiration and inspiration to praise and please the high and holy One. As a kite tugs on its string, never able to attain its full desire, so we can never quite attain the desired height of communion with God until our "silver cord be loosed, . . . and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:6, 7). Let us not neglect to offer our daily incense.

Used by permission from: "The Eastern Mennonite Testimony."

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

Wouldst thou have that good, that blessed mind,
That is so much to heavenly things inclin'd
That it aloft will soar, and always be
Contemplating on blest eternity.
That mind that never thinks itself at rest,
But when it knows it is for ever blest;
That mind that can be here no more content,
Than he that in the prison doth lament;
That blessed mind that counts itself then free
When it can at the throne with Jesus be,
There to behold the mansions he prepares
For such as be with Him and His co-heirs.
This mind is in the covenant of grace,
And shall be theirs that truly seek His face.

THE OPERATION OF FAITH.

The word of faith unto me pardon brings,
Shows me the ground and reason whence it springs:
To wit, free grace, which moved God to give
His Son to die and bleed, that I might live.
This word doth also loudly preach to me,
Though I a miserable sinner be,
Yet in this Son of God I stand complete,
Whose righteousness is without all deceit;
'Tis that which God Himself delighteth in,
And that by which all His have saved been.

First published in 1664 by John Bunyan whilst in prison for conscience sake.

Confession and Petition

Holy Lord, I have sinned times without number, and been guilty of pride and unbelief, of failure to find Thy mind in Thy Word, of neglect to seek Thee in my daily life. My transgressions and short-comings present me with a list of accusations, but I bless Thee that they will not stand against me, for all have been laid on Christ. Go on to subdue my corruptions, and grant me grace to live above them. Let not the passions of the flesh nor lustings of the mind bring my spirit into subjection, but do Thou rule over me in liberty and power.

I thank Thee that many of my prayers have been refused. I have asked amiss and do not have, I have prayed from lusts and been rejected, I have longed for Egypt and been given a wilderness. Go on with Thy patient work, answering 'no' to my wrongful prayers, and fitting me to accept it. Purge me from every false desire, every base aspiration, everything contrary to Thy rule. I thank Thee for Thy wisdom and Thy love, for all the acts of discipline to which I am subject, or sometimes putting me into the furnace to refine my gold and remove my dross.

No trial is so hard to bear as a sense of sin. If Thou shouldst give me choice to live in pleasure and keep my sins, or to have them burnt away with trial, give me sanctified affliction. Deliver me from every evil habit, every accretion of former sins, everything that dims the brightness of Thy grace in me, everything that prevents me taking delight in Thee. Then I shall bless Thee, God of Jeshurun, (Israel) for helping me to be upright.

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