

The Christian Family Plan.

Text: Deut 6:4-9

Suggested Hymns:

592, 609, 589, 294, 588

1) The personal faith of parents

2) The Christian education of children

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Deuteronomy 6:4-9, ***4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! 5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Two murderers were sentenced to death for killing a young service-station attendant during a hold-up. As they waited for their walk to the death chamber, the doomed pair gave a joint statement to the press that read something like this:

"In our own defence we want to say that we have never had a fair chance in life. We lived in broken homes, unloved and neglected by our parents. We have never known the care of a father, or the love and affection of a mother. We were left to grow up like animals. There was no religious training to give us proper direction. Church services, Sunday school, and family Bible reading were never a part of our lives. We only hope that our tragic, misspent lives and our disgraceful death will serve as a warning to young and old."

However, Christian parents recognise their children as trusts from God. They know that someday they will have to give an account. They know the

Scriptural command in Ephesians 6:4, ⁴ *And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*

They are aware of Christ's pronouncement in Matthew 18:6, ⁶ *"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* And so parents take their responsibilities and privileges of parenthood seriously and include religious training as a part of everyday living.

Dr. Martin Luther warns parents in his Large Catechism, *"Think what deadly harm you do when you are negligent in this respect and fail to bring up your children to usefulness and piety. You bring upon yourself sin and wrath, thus earning hell by the way you have reared your own children, no matter how devout and holy you may be in other respects."*¹

No one can do better than to heed the prescription for happiness for the home outlined in today's text. Let us consider *The Christian Family Plan*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Personal Faith Of Parents

First addressed to Israel, the words of our text have come through the centuries written also for our learning. The truth still stands, *The LORD our God, the LORD is one!* And the command recorded here and later repeated by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 22:37 still applies, *'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'*

Here is the foundation and the framework of Christian faith and life. It is the unquestioning acceptance of the only true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the three-in-one God, and the undying, undivided devotion that loves and wants Him above everything else.

Man's natural tendency, of course, does not lie in that direction. People by nature are inclined towards idolatry, the worship of other gods — gods of wood and stone, of gold and silver, and the work of people's hands.

Man's inherited inclination is to prefer material comforts to divine comfort, and earthly goods to heaven's God. And only by the power of God's Word and

Holy Spirit will men and women come to know, to accept, and to love the living Lord and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.

We read in Romans 10:17, *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* Scripture also says that *“No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.”*²

And if the homes of the world are to be truly happy homes, then the heads of those homes will regard the true God as their Head, and Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour from sin in a vibrant, personal faith that from the heart has its roots in God’s Word, moved by God’s Holy Spirit, and loving Him because He first loved us.³

Fathers and mothers, bow before the only God there is! *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”*⁴ Lay your sins on Jesus! Worship the Lord and come before His presence with thanksgiving! Serve Him from Sunday through Sunday with an undivided heart, a sanctified soul, and a humble mind!

Such a personal faith of parents, implanted and grounded in God’s Word, riveted upon the triune God, focused on the cross of Calvary, is the solid foundation of *“The Christian Family Plan”* that seeks the temporal and eternal welfare of any household.

When father and mother show respect for God and His Word and take their children to church and Sunday school, their profession of Christianity will carry indescribable weight. Parents who say to their son and daughter, “Come,” have more influence of personal faith than do those who only say, “Go.”

The mother who reads her Bible; the father who says his prayers in the presence of the entire family; the husband and wife who together live a godly life, as the love of the Lord shines through in their love for each other as a fruit of personal faith; the parents who establish a family pew, have family devotions, seeking strength for their faith in the regular hearing of the saving truth of God’s Word, and in the frequent eating and drinking of Christ’s true body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar — such parents are the beloved of God and excellent patterns for their families. For as the parents go, so go their children.

Yes, the personal faith of parents confesses, *I believe that God has created me and all that exists. He has given me and still preserves my body and soul with*

all their powers. He provides me with food and clothing, home and family, daily work, and all I need from day to day. God also protects me in time of danger and guards me from every evil.

All this He does out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercy, though I do not deserve it. Therefore I surely ought to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

Likewise such parents openly expresses, I believe that Jesus Christ - true God, Son of the Father from eternity, and true man, born of the Virgin Mary - is my Lord. At great cost He has saved and redeemed me, a lost and condemned person. He has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil - not with silver or gold, but with His holy and precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.

All this He has done that I may be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally.

They also humbly admit, I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

Such a faith is fashioning and maintaining a family plan that will pay eternal dividends in love and laughter, in liberty and life for the parents and their families.

Therefore a successful family plan that starts with the parents' personal faith necessarily includes and makes provision also for the Christian education of the children.

2. The Christian Education Of Children

*The Lord in our text does not only say, ⁶ **And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.** But He adds, ⁷ **“You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.** ⁸ **“You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.** ⁹ **“You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.***

Frontlets were bands with a leather case attached, worn on the forehead by Jewish men. Inside the case were pieces of parchment on which were inscribed, besides the Scripture passage that forms our text, three other passages (Exo. 13:1-10, 11-16; Deut. 11:13-21).

Wearing these was a symbol of obedience to the commands of God. It is quite obvious, then, from our text that especially the fathers were and are to take an active interest and play an important part in the Christian education of their children.

To our own little ones, we who are parents are the only Bible that they read. It is not difficult to talk to our families about God, if we have first talked to God about our families. Children are by nature very sensitive and most curious. They ask many questions.

These very questions, which relate themselves to many things coming from active imaginations and minds, can in many cases, be the most perfect introduction or opportunity to speak of Bible truths concerning creation, preservation, redemption, and sanctification.

The work of God can so easily be tied in with our everyday conversations with our children. Sometimes it is while the father is shaving, while the mother is dusting or doing dishes, while visiting in the home or working in the garden or at the sewing table that the Christian education of children proves the most fruitful.

The "*Christian Family Plan*" teaches children to say and sing as did one 4-year-old: *Jesus loves me, this I know For my Mummy tells me so! Jesus loves me; yes, Jesus loves me, For my Daddy tells me so!*

May all of us confess our sins and pledge ourselves to be heaven's representatives in a Christian family plan!

Major William E. Mayer, an army psychiatrist, interviewed 200 American soldiers whom the Russians released after the Korean War. He concluded that it was possible for the Russians to brainwash about one quarter of the American prisoners because they first of all lacked religious convictions.

That is something to think about! Religious training and Christian education are the strongest defences against brainwashing of any kind, whether such

brainwashing be done by political systems, the media, or by the local crowd of hoodlums that suggest ways of sin and evil.

There is an important place for more religious training of children in the home by God-fearing, Bible-knowing Christians. The cry of our times is for a definite, deliberate effort to teach the soul-saving truths of God's Word in the family circle. We need more tele-mission and less television; more telling of Bible stories and less viewing of "Gun-smoke." We need more house mothers and fewer out mothers! We need more pious fathers teaching their children about Christ and fewer fathers running out on Christ and His church.

And as a supplement to the Christian education of children in the home, the church supports the "*Christian Family Plan*" with Sunday school and Confirmation classes. These are to be considered as aids to, and not substitutes for home training.

Christian schools, with its fine, qualified, teaching staff of Christ-dedicated and Christ-devoted teachers, is eminently equipped to serve those who properly value the "*Christian Family Plan.*"

Where Christian education in the home is our big interest, there the helps offered by the Christian congregation will be highly valued, eagerly sought, and gratefully supported. Sacrifices will be made so that Christ, our Sacrifice for sins, may be our children's All in all.

What a tremendous influence this will have on our children and on our congregation, on our country and community, as in every way possible Christian parents show the importance of Christian training from the cradle to the grave.

Where the importance and the need for Christ in the heart and home is the core and center of the "*Christian Family Plan,*" there provision for a happy reunion in heaven is a matter of wise pre-arrangement. Our children will rise up and call us blessed; better yet, they will stand up for Jesus and finally be with their family at the right hand of God, safe in His arms forever.

Jesus forgives our families' sins. He is the Saviour of our families' souls. You and I do not know how long we shall have our dear ones. Some of us already have mounds on cemeteries holding the remains of father, mother, son, daughter, brother, or sister. As someone said, "*Defer not till tomorrow to be wise; tomorrow's sun to you may never rise.*"

What a recommendation for the “*Christian Family Plan*” is the following story.

A boy lay dying. His father and mother were at his bedside crying. The dying lad turned to his parents and with a desperate final effort at cheering them said, “*Don’t be sad. When I get to heaven, I’ll go straight to Jesus and tell Him that all my life, you have been leading me to Him.*” That is the “*Christian Family Plan.*”

Parents who will talk of God’s wonders and see that His wonderful works are remembered by them and their children, will use every opportunity in the home and church to exalt Christ, as the Saviour of marvellous mercy, who died to free them from sin. Such families will receive the greatest blessings God can give.

The “*Christian Family Plan*” is a “package deal” that combines personal faith and Christian training, as the one inseparably complements the other.

If in God’s presence we are to be able to say, “*This is my family — all of us,*” then it is necessary true that already now we have Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ T. G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978, P389, para 176

² 1 Corinthians 12:3

³ 1 John 4:19

⁴ Matthew 6:33