

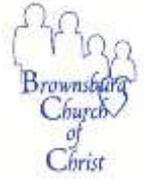
The Plugged In Family

Brownsburg Church of Christ

by Edwin Crozier

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PM Assembly



Introduction:

As Moses was about to be taken from Israel, he gave them a final message. He began by restating the 10 commandments. But then he told them how to keep Israel faithful. He did not say, "Make sure the priests keep teaching the law." He did not say, "Make sure your leaders and judges teach this law." In **Deuteronomy 6:4-7**, he commanded the parents to teach their children. Israel was to maintain faithfulness through its families. One of God's most overlooked tools is your family. God can use your family to accomplish great things for His kingdom, but only if it is plugged in. **Psalm 127:1**, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it." The Lord will only build your house if you ask Him. You may be doing a lot of things and making lots of money. You may live in a nice house, drive nice cars and wear nice clothes. Your children may be excellent students or athletes. But if you are not praying, your house is not built by the Lord; all you are doing is in vain. Is your family plugged in?

Discussion:

I. Husbands and fathers: Prayer Leaders.

- A. According to **Ephesians 5:22-24**, we husbands are to be to our wives what Christ is to the church—the leader. How is your family's prayer life? Do not tell me your wife won't cooperate. Do not tell me your children's schedules. Tell me how is your family's prayer life? Do you pray any more than at meals and a quick, "Now I lay me down to sleep ..." at bedtime? Do you even do that? Men, we are at war. **Ephesians 6:10-13** explains the battle. These hellish forces are not just attacking us and our families. As our families fight this battle, we are the leaders.
- B. Based on **Ephesians 5:23**, we must see Jesus' prayer role to see ours.
 1. According to **Romans 8:34** and **Hebrews 7:25**, Jesus intercedes for His church. How much time do you spend praying on your family's behalf? When you pray for your wife and children, do you pray for them or for yourself that God will make them what you want them to be? "Dear Lord, please help my wife be more submissive, less emotional and get off my back about the cluttered garage." **James 4:3** explains selfish prayers are unacceptable.
 2. Second, in **Luke 11:1-13**, Jesus taught His disciples to pray. We must teach our families to pray. Jesus' disciples asked Him because they saw Him pray. Based on your example, would your family think they could learn to pray from you? Pray with them. Let them hear you praise God and thank Him. Let them hear you confess. Let them hear your petitions. Teach them to pray by instruction. Read the Bible with them, making special note of the prayer passages and how they influence our prayers.
- C. Finally, do not believe you can do a bit of good as a prayer leader if you are mistreating your family (**I Peter 3:7**). If you are allowing sin and bitterness to run rampant, your prayers do not make it through your attic. Get control of your life. Be a godly husband, a godly father and take up the mantle of leader. Invite the Lord to build your house.

II. Wives and mothers: Prayer Partners.

- A. **Proverbs 14:1** says, "The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands." These are your choices. Either you build your house or you pull it down. You are only building your house if you invite the Lord to build it for you (**Psalm 127:1**). Unless you pray, you pull your house down. So many of you, wives, do so much for your families. The old adage says, "A man may work from sun to sun but a woman's work is never done." But do you make any of it worthwhile by praying?
- B. Sisters, **Genesis 2:18** says your overarching responsibility in the home is to be your husband's helper, his partner. **Proverbs 31:12** says, "She does him good and not evil all the days of her life." The greatest good you can do for your husband is to pray with him and pray for him. Our culture has developed a competition mindset between husbands and wives that too often produces bitterness. Satan fosters this competition. After all, if our family is fighting with itself, we have no time to mount successful attacks against him. Wives, competition is a hindrance to prayer with and for your husband. When you view your husband as the competition, you view him as the enemy and you don't want to pray for him, you want to beat him. Of course, **Matthew 5:44** is quite clear. You are to pray even for your enemies. But wouldn't it be so much easier to

pray for your husband if you viewed your union as a team and yourself as a partner? I know it is tough sometimes. But instead of trying to knock him down a notch or two by competing with him. How about beginning the partnering process by praying with him and for him?

- C. You must first follow the advice of Peter in **I Peter 3:3-4**, adorning yourselves with a gentle, meek spirit. This does not mean you have to change your personality. It does mean you have to remember you are a partner with your husband not a competitor. To accomplish this you must value what God values, think what God thinks and want what God wants. You are going to have let your life and your family be God's instruments.
- D. Regrettably, I must address the wives who deal with husbands who will not be prayer leaders. Too many men, even Christian men, get caught up in material pursuits and let spirituality slip in their families. Wives, remember **I Peter 3:1-2**. You must continue to conduct yourself in discreet submission. Pray for your husbands. Pray for yourself that you might be the wife you ought to be. Pray for your husband in front of your children and teach them to pray for him. Thank God for your husband and the aspects of his life that are praiseworthy; and do so in front of your children. Furthermore, never belittle your husband because he is not what he is supposed to be. Simply pray for him and help him become what he ought to be. Whatever you do, do not teach your children to berate or belittle their father for his lack of spirituality. They may need to pray for their father to overcome weaknesses and sins, but they must always honor him as their father.

III. Children: Obeying Prayers.

- A. Children, **Ephesians 6:1-2** says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Your role is obedience. This is the number one principle guiding your prayers, that you may fulfill your role, obeying and honoring your mother and father.
- B. Prayer is not just for adults. You must not wait until you have graduated, moved out and started "your own life" to pray. One of the most regrettable things we do with children today is segregate them off based on their age. How many times do we have people over to sing, study or pray and send our children (even the ones who have already become Christians) off to play. Children, respectfully let your parents know you need to worship God with them. Listen to how your parents pray. Ask them to teach you to pray. If your parents do not pray, find someone who does.
- C. Pray for your parents. Raising you is not easy. Your parents believe it is the toughest thing they have to do. They live in constant fear they are doing it incorrectly. Further, thank God profusely for your parents, even with all their faults. They feed you, clothe you, send you to school, bring you to the assemblies. They deserve your prayers.
- D. In **Proverbs 3: 5-8**, Solomon's words to his son have special application to your prayers. Perhaps you have already learned the world is fickle. You cannot trust it. Too often you cannot trust your friends or sometimes your family. But you must always trust God. He is always there for you. Further, you must acknowledge Him in all your ways. You get to eat and breathe because of God. Your successes are because of God. You must thank and acknowledge Him. You must never be wise in your own eyes believing you have provided any of what you have. This is particularly pertinent for young adults. How easy it is to believe we have figured out all the answers. Do not fall into this trap, which society is so willing to let you believe. Simply follow the Lord, fearing Him, trusting Him, praying to Him. This will be health and strength to you. Children, do not wait to pray. Start now.

IV. Practical advice for praying families.

- A. *Schedule family prayer time.* Prayer won't happen unless you schedule it. Consider **Acts 3:1**. Peter and John had a scheduled time of prayer (3 pm). We schedule school, work, club meetings, PTA, Bible classes, sports practice and games. We work not to let other things interfere. Schedule your family prayer. Please don't feel burdened to schedule every day. Start with something you know you can do and build from there.
- B. *Make sure your children hear both parents pray.* I am often asked about wives praying out loud in their husbands' presence. The home is not the same as the assembly. While wives are to be submissive in the home, there is no indication they have to remain silent. Keep in mind the very thing prohibited in the assembly in **I Corinthians 14:35**, was told to be done in the home. Therefore, what was restricted in the assembly, was not necessarily restricted in the home. In my opinion, your children need to hear both parents pray. Fathers, you do not want your sons thinking prayer is a "girlie" activity because they only ever heard their mothers prayer. Mothers, you do not want your daughters believing prayer is the province of men. You want all your children to know prayer is an important part of both parents' lives. If they ever think one parent doesn't pray, they will likely not see the importance of prayer in their lives.

- C. *Husbands and wives need to pray together.* This is self-explanatory. It doesn't need to be a big thing. But prayer should be an anchor of your marriage. When you make a decision together, pray together. When you know of a need, pray together. When you are having struggles, pray together. Pray for each other together. You might do this before you go to bed, while the kids are napping or first thing in the morning. You may do it once a week or seven times a week. But you need to pray together as a married couple.
- D. *Encourage your children by praising their prayers.* The biggest means by which your children will learn to pray is by listening to you pray. But now and then something will creep into their prayers that is not correct. On rare occasions, you may need to gently teach them out of some prayer habit. I have typically reserved that for when my children have done something that showed disrespect for prayer or for God. However, if you constantly criticize their immature childlike prayers, you will crush their praying spirit. Instead, encourage them by praising the parts of their prayers that are good. Watch their prayers blossom by taking this approach.
- E. *Pray through the Bible.* No doubt, there are numerous approaches you can take for your family prayers. But I have recently learned an approach I think is phenomenal and I know will revolutionize your family prayer time if you follow it. It is good for all of us as individuals, married couples or single people. But it is especially great for families with children. I have adapted it from David Banning, but I think he adapted it from the authors of the *Our Spiritual Heritage* Bible class curriculum. We call it "praying through the Bible." When you gather to pray, have each person who can write get a piece of paper. Have them write five statements on the paper leaving room in between for more information. 1) *Dear God, You are...* 2) *Dear God, You...* 3) *Dear God, thank You for...* 4) *Dear God, forgive me for...* 5) *Dear God, help...* Then pick a Bible passage to read. It could be a few verses, a chapter or multiple chapters. Let me encourage you to put feeling into the reading, especially if you have small children. In my family, we even try to come up with voices for the characters and have special voices for the narrator. As one person reads through the text, everyone fills in the blanks with issues the chapter says or reminds them of regarding what God is, what God has done, thanks to God, confession of sins and help needed. Discuss what you have written. You might even keep a journal where you record what everyone has said in each chapter. Then let each person pray. When we do this, I tell my kids they can pray for anything but I especially want them to pray some of the things they wrote down. I also encourage them to keep these things in mind when they pray at other times. The first time I tried this, my cousin's children were with us for the week, but I knew I couldn't let that hinder me or we would never start. So there we were with six kids reading a chapter and all of us praying. Don't you know that took some time and effort? When we got finished, the kids asked, "Can we do that again tomorrow?" Since we have started this form of prayer, I have had times when I was overwhelmed and didn't feel like getting to the family prayer, but my kids are staying on me to get it done. You just can't beat that.

Conclusion:

We come full circle to **Psalm 127:1**, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it." To the family who does not pray, that psalm is pretty frightening. But to the plugged-in family, it is great comfort. When your family prays, everything you do is worthwhile. When you invite the Lord to build your home, He can and will do exceedingly, abundantly above all you ask and think through your family (**Ephesians 3:20**). Therefore we conclude with our question again, "Is your family praying?"