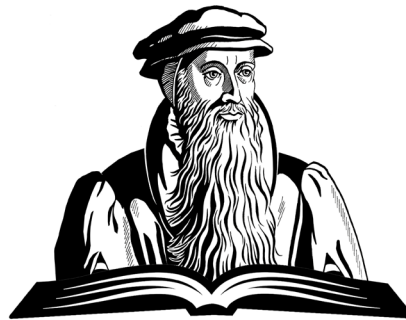


VIDEO DOCUMENTARY SERIES

Family Worship

EPISODE II:

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN FAMILY WORSHIP



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

John Knox Institute of Higher Education

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Our Speakers:

Rev. Robert D. McCurley is minister of the gospel at Greenville Presbyterian Church, in Taylors, South Carolina, USA, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), Presbytery of the United States.

www.greenvillepresbyterian.com

Rev. Ian Macleod is minister of the gospel in the Heritage Reformed Churches, in Tillsonburg, Ontario, Canada.

www.heritagereformed.com

Rev. Gavin Beers is minister of the gospel at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church, in Burlington, North Carolina, USA, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), Presbytery of the United States.

www.cornerstone-presbyterian.com

Rev. Graeme Craig is a minister of the gospel at Bethel Free Church, in Ayr, Scotland, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), Southern Presbytery.

www.freechurchcontinuing.org

Rev. William Macleod recently retired, after serving as minister of the gospel for 45 years at Knightswood Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), in Glasgow, Scotland. In addition, he was for many years the editor of the denominational magazine, *The Free Church Witness*. He was also Professor of Systematic Theology and Principal of the Free Church (Continuing) Seminary, in Inverness, Scotland. He is married and has three adult children and six grandchildren.

www.freechurchcontinuing.org

Rev. Michael Spangler is minister of the gospel in the State of North Carolina, USA.

Rev. Maurice J. Roberts is retired minister of the gospel in the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). He previously served congregations at Ayr Martyrs, in Ayr, Scotland, then at Inverness Greyfriars, Scotland. He served as Moderator of the General Assembly in 2007, and was lecturer in Greek and New Testament at the Free Church (Continuing) Seminary, in Inverness, Scotland. In addition, he was editor of the *Banner of Truth Magazine* for a number of years, and is the author of several books. He has preached in many parts of the world, and has had a deep love for the Jews, for whose conversion to Christ he has frequently prayed.

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Family Worship

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VIDEO DOCUMENTARY SERIES

Family Worship

EPISODE II

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN FAMILY WORSHIP

READING THE BIBLE

GAVIN BEERS

Well, after addressing the issue of if we should have Family Worship, when we get that settled in our minds, the next question is, obviously, how do we conduct Family Worship? And so, if you step back and think of worship, whether it's public worship or private worship, the Word of God is absolutely central. The Bible itself shows us that the Word of the Lord is the chief means of grace. And so, God speaks to us through his Word, and that Word is blessed to us by the Holy Spirit, and it's used to bring us to faith in Christ, and then to sanctify us and to make us holy, like the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, you bring that to Family Worship, and it's therefore key that we read the Word of God together. The entrance of God's Word gives light. You could think of Psalm 119, the longest Psalm in the whole Bible, and it's all about the Word of God. It shows us that, as pilgrims in this world, the only way that we can successfully walk is if we walk according to God's Word. So every individual needs God's Word every day. Well, from that, could we not say also that every family needs the Word of God every day? And so we must bring our families to the Word in Family Worship.

GRAEME CRAIG

Well, the Word of God is the only rule God has given to direct us how we should glorify and worship him, how we should live for him, and therefore, God's Word must be central. It is a light to our path. And therefore, really to instruct our children in the ways of God. And when we read through the Bible, and read through it by course, then we actually bring before our children a whole range of Scripture teaching. We even bring before our children things that otherwise we might ignore. And that, depending on the age of the children, can be very beneficial. So Scripture really is key. We'll remember that preachers in public worship will not always apply Scripture to our own personal individual situations, and in families it's a lot more easy to do that, because the parents know the situation of the children, and it's a little like our own personal Bible reading. We try and apply it to ourselves, so we are able to apply it to the family, whatever stage they are at in life.

MICHAEL SPANGLER

Well, it's central to Family Worship, just like it's central to the Christian life, and central to the public worship at the church. The Word is the foundation of the Christian life, the foundation of the church, the foundation of the Christian family. And in all the things we do in worship, the Word is central, whether in the family or in the church. So we pray according to the pattern of the

Word. We sing the Word itself in the Psalms that God gave us. And we read the Word and apply it to our lives. And so really, everything we do in Family Worship is right from the Bible.

WILLIAM MACLEOD

The Scriptures, of course, have to be at the very center of Family Worship. We talk to God in prayer, and God talks to us through the Bible. God reveals himself to us in creation, but that's a very indistinct revelation. But in the Bible, he gives us all that we really need to know, and we're told that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God might be thoroughly furnished unto all good works." So, the Bible then is setting before us the way we should live, setting before us the gospel, calling upon us to worship God, and giving to God that central place that he should have in our lives. So without the Bible, we cannot properly worship God, we cannot know about God—we only know about God through the Bible—and from the Bible, we get direction as to how we should live from day to day.

IAN MACLEOD

So when we come to ask what role Scripture reading and study should have in Family Worship, we are now asking a question that concerns what we should do in Family Worship. And here it's good to remember that it is Family Worship. And when we think of worship, of course, we're going to the Scripture to ask, what does the Lord require of us? We believe that the Lord alone is the one who commands worship, and he is the one who graciously has told us what we to do in worship. And so that which is not commanded by him in worship is excluded and indeed prohibited.

And when you think of the place of reading, and I would say consecutive reading of Scripture, in the life of a family—a family who is faithfully reading the Scripture, day by day, chapter after chapter, book after book, over time the whole of the Scripture is being brought to bear. All the instruction is being brought to bear upon the child. And over time, that doctrine that is according to godliness comes into the mind, and with the blessing of the Spirit, into the heart of our children.

MAURICE ROBERTS

Well, all true religion is based on the teaching of the Bible. This is extremely important. False religion is based on the Bible plus a whole lot of other things. That's where liberalism has gone wrong, and sad to say, that's where some churches have gone wrong, in the past and present. So, the great rule in all true worship is, it must be based upon the teaching of the Bible, which is given by inspiration of God. So if we mean to worship God in spirit and in truth, it must be, the Bible must be right in the dead center of all our practice. So that's why the reading of the Bible in Family Worship is extremely important.

ROBERT McCURLEY

So the Word of God lies at the core of Family Worship. We read it, we sing it, it serves as a rule to guide us in our prayers. But the reading of Scripture is the most central element. In the reading of Scripture, God is speaking to us. And the goal is for us to be saturated with his Word. We want to think God's thoughts after him. We want his Word to dwell in us richly. We want to hide his Word within our hearts. And so, for the family to receive guidance, as a family, from the Lord, they need to be attentive to what God says, and the implications of all that he says for

their own particular circumstances, by way of application to the decisions that lie before them, and guidance that's needed for the future, and so on. And so, Scripture reading is indispensable to Family Worship.

SINGING THE PSALMS

ROBERT McCURLEY

The singing of God's inspired praise in the singing of Psalms engages us in ways that reading and hearing don't. So when we take up the words of the Psalms, and we begin to sing them, they engage our affections, they stir our hearts. They also are an aid in embedding the memory of God's Word in our mind. So it's easier for children, for example, to remember or memorize something that is put to a tune and sung. And so the Lord, in his wisdom, has given to us the singing of Psalms, in order that we might be filled with grace and the Holy Spirit in walking in accord with his ways. And so Psalm singing has an indispensable place within the worship of God's people generally, and within the worship of the home.

You'll also note that there's massive accumulation that takes place as a result. So we're singing Psalms at church, but then we're singing Psalms morning and evening in Family Worship, and we're singing Psalms in our private worship and throughout the day as well. That accumulation is exponential, so the sheer volume of sung praise has an impact upon us, both in terms of our ability to directly glorify God, but also to find our own souls edified.

GAVIN BEERS

Another aspect of worship that is vital is praise. The Bible exhorts everyone to praise the Lord. Indeed, everything that hath breath is to praise him. And sometimes we can excuse ourselves, saying, "Well, I can't sing." But if the Lord converts someone and changes his heart, he then puts a new song into that heart, even praise unto the Lord. And that's going to have an impact upon a family. In Psalm 118, verse 15, we're told that in the dwellings of the tabernacles of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and salvation. So we bring this into Family Worship, and we discover there are wonderful benefits of praising God together. So it's not only that he's commanded us to praise him—he then blesses us in doing so. God has given us a book in the Bible to sing from. And in the Book of Psalms, we have so many different kinds of Psalms to sing that are helpful in every area of our family life. And so, we can rejoice and sing joyous Psalms of praise. And then at other times, when we're going through difficulties, we can sing songs of sorrow and lament. We can express even our confusion to the Lord. Then there are times that we can go to be instructed out of the Psalms. Indeed, the Bible itself says that we are to teach and admonish one another in "singing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." And then, of course, Christ is everywhere in the Psalms, and we get the great privilege of singing of him, and even singing with him. So the more that we sing these Psalms together as a family, we will have a deeper and more mature understanding of ourselves, and of God, and the Christian life, and the world, and also of our blessed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

MICHAEL SPANGLER

Psalm singing should be central to Family Worship, in the sense that it is a great blessing given to us that is particularly useful in Family Worship. So my children, for example, when they're very young, they aren't able to form prayers on their own. They don't even directly

benefit as much from the reading of the Word, though they grow in it quite quickly, but the Psalms have a power in them that's a great blessing and help. I think the simple answer is, God commands us to sing the Psalms, in Ephesians 5, and Colossians 3. The whole Psalter is full of commands, and we ought to do what God commanded. But we can see great benefit in it, and we wouldn't want it to be absent from our Family Worship.

GRAEME CRAIG

Non-biblical songs, non-worship songs, and not use our voices and that musical gift for the best of things? God's worthy of our praise. And therefore, I believe the singing of praise is an essential part of Family Worship as well as public worship. Public worship would be strange if it didn't have praise in it. During the recent lockdowns, some have said, Well, let's not have singing. But others, like myself, have felt that singing is a central part of worship. And to worship without singing, I'm sure it's the same for Family Worship. In a sense, this is a slightly formal, though family setting where we worship God, and there's no excuse for us not singing. And therefore, we should praise God in our homes.

WILLIAM MACLEOD

The Psalms are the inspired songbook that God has given to us. So they are the Word of God, and they are superior in that sense to every other song or poem that we might have. And the Psalms are unique in the Bible, in that they describe the Christian experience and the Christian life, and we can always find our own experiences in the Psalms. So it's good to have Psalm singing in our daily worship. Psalm 118, verse 15 speaks about the melody of joy and salvation in the house of the righteous. So God's people have that melody in their houses, singing the praises of God. And God has given us these Psalms in order that we would sing them to him. And through singing, we learn the Psalms, and we are able to praise God with the Psalms. But the Psalms are also a great book of prayers. So we not only praise God in the Psalms, but we also pray to God, and in that way, we teach one another, and we worship God.

MAURICE ROBERTS

Well, the Bible does tell us we are to sing praises to God, and those of us who believe in exclusive Psalmody make it our rule to take the Psalms as a substance of what we ought to sing in praise to God. So it is good for a father and a mother and the children to be in the habit of singing together, so that they all share in giving glory to God in the way we sing. And it also helps us to memorize the Word of God, because the metrical Psalms are excellent as ways of being self-memorizing, the substance of what the Bible teaches. And so, if we sing the praises of God, these words stick in our memory, and we can keep going back to them to get benefit from them.

IAN MACLEOD

What role should Psalm singing have in Family Worship? And our minds go to Psalm 118, verse 15—in the metrical version, it says, “In dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and praise: the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly.” It really is such a beautiful thing to sing God's praises with our families. It's one of the most beautiful sounds Christian parents can hear, to hear their young children singing of the Lord, and singing his praises day and night.

Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry, he said something to this effect, that those who are singing the Psalms of David in Family Worship, they're like Rahab with the scarlet thread.

All those who walk by their homes can see a scarlet thread—the scarlet thread of the gospel in this home. The Directory for Family Worship, in the back of the *Westminster Standards*, tells us that “It is the duty of Christians to praise God publically, by singing of Psalms together in the congregation, and also privately in the families.” So in dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and praise.”

MEMORIZATION

WILLIAM MACLEOD

It’s amazing how, if you sing Psalms in the Family Worship, how over a period of time, the children learn these Psalms actually by heart. I remember, with our own children, when they were young, even before they could read, we would sing some Psalms over repeatedly, and they quickly learned these Psalms by heart. And that’s something that stays with them for the rest of their life, so that’s certainly beneficial.

ROBERT McCURLEY

Both Psalm singing and Scripture memorization have a way of burying God’s Word in our hearts and in our heads. And so, we’re able, through laying up a good store in our minds, to take the Word of God with us. We can’t always be reading Scripture. If we have memorized metrical Psalms, whether we’re in the car, or whether we have “dead time” at work, or whether we’re in other circumstances otherwise not preoccupied, we’re better able to call back to the forefront of our minds things that we can reflect upon. And so it aids us in meditation. And not only reading or hearing, even singing the Word of God, it enables us to ruminate, to meditate and think about what the Word is saying, what it means, what its implications are for our lives. The first step in mediation is actually memorization—having it in our mind where we can then mull it over, and break it down, and digest, and apply it. Both Psalm singing and Scripture memorization are a great benefit in that regard.

GAVIN BEERS

The psalmist says that he would hide God’s Word in his heart that he might not sin against him. To do that, evidently requires memorization, and we have a wonderful opportunity to this as a family, in Family Worship. There are three main ways we could do it. First of all—the most important—memorize the Word of the Lord. And then, we have catechisms of the Christian faith, which summarize for us the great truths of the Christian religion. And then, if we sing the Psalms, we also have the opportunity of memorizing God’s Word in that way. So maybe after a time of worship, then we could add to that period of Family Worship a time of memorization.

And in particular, your children’s minds as they grow up, they’re like little sponges, and they will be able to memorize much of the Word of God. And you have the opportunity as parents to put that Word into their minds when they are young. And when you do that, what you’ll see is that your children will gradually come to a deeper understanding of the Bible. And with the blessing of God, they will have a more mature appreciation of the Christian faith and the Christian walk.

You can think of the Book of Psalms, for example. John Calvin once described it as an anatomy of all parts of the soul. It’s very intricate. It teaches us about our joys and sorrows. It

probes or motives. It teaches us to examine our hearts. It presents to us difficulties that we will face. And God, in his wisdom, has given us songs to sing. And very often when you sing, the Word is lodged into your memory. I have the opportunity of preaching to a congregation, and sometimes I see little children who can't even read, and they've been memorizing Psalms at home. And they're so full of joy when a Psalm is chosen that they know. And they're singing out to the Lord because God's Word has been put in their minds and in their hearts. And so, the more we do this as a family, we will be well-instructed in the whole counsel of God, and we will be equipped to put on the whole armor of God, that we might stand in an evil day.

IAN MACLEOD

When we think of singing the Psalms in worship, we would certainly want to commend Psalm singing to you. The Psalms—the Psalter at the very center of our Bibles—are God's complete and perfect song book, for the praises of his church, both in the assemblies of his people, and also in their homes. And to such a large extent, the piety of a people is shaped by what they sing. And when people really learn to know, to sing, to pray the prayers of the Psalter, this shapes a piety like nothing else can.

MAURICE ROBERTS

Well, it's very important to memorize the Word of God, because when that's the case, when people have the Bible in their memories, they can apply it to the practical details of everyday life. And if they want guidance in some way, what they have to do is, they have to shut their eyes and say, "Well, I remember that the Bible says, if we're Christians, we shouldn't marry the unbelievers." And that's an example of the principles that should guide us in life. And we mustn't steal, and we mustn't commit adultery, and we must love our neighbor as ourself. So if we have the Psalms in our memory, and Bible verses in our memory, then it will direct the conscience—that's the important thing. It will direct the conscience of the person to live their lives in a way which is consistent with what God commands us to do.

MICHAEL SPANGLER

Regarding Psalm singing, our family loves to sing the Psalms. What a blessing that God gave us this book, which is so perfect. It perfectly reflects our Christian needs, our Christian heart, our joys, our sorrows, our sadnesses. It teaches us how to pray. It teaches us how to think, how to feel. God is so kind to give us the Psalter, and in that he's added the delight of singing his wisdom. And we've seen that wisdom proven in our life. It's much easier, for example, because of the melody, to memorize a Psalm, and thus hide God's Word in our heart. It makes more of an impact because of the singing of it. It brings help to the children. It really engages young children in Family Worship, even before they're able to read, because you can teach them to memorize, or just read the line of the Psalm for them to sing it. So I highly recommend Family Worship include Psalm singing.

Many will find it difficult at first, but like all other things that are worth doing, they're worth learning to do. So, if you find it hard, use Psalms you know, use tunes you know, and then slowly add more. And of course, public worship will be a great help to you, in that you're singing the Psalms of God with the people of God there.

And regarding the memory of the Bible, in my family, we don't have a program or an active effort in the Family Worship itself, but my children are memorizing Scripture in their schooling

at home. I have seen it done with great profit by other families, and I recommend that families at least consider it, that you have a time in which you recite passages of the Bible, so that they would be better hidden in the heart.

FAMILY PRAYER

GAVIN BEERS

Prayer has been described as the breath of the soul. And prayer, in some ways, is the most fundamental aspect of worship. It's actually where it all begins. This poor man cries, and God hears, and saves him from all of his distresses. Like that publican in the temple who smote upon his breast, and then began to pray, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." And so when we think of coming before God as families, prayer must be at the heart of it. The very moment that we open our mouths to pray to God, we're saying something. We're saying God is God, and we are not." We're saying, I am dependent upon him for everything. And and yet, at the same time, we're expressing confidence; we're trusting in him. We're saying, he is the all-sufficient God who is able to meet every need that we have. So how do we expect to get through the day without prayer? You want God's blessing upon your family. You want to know his protection and his safety. You want to see your family members converted. You want to see growth in grace. You desire spiritual blessings. And yet all these things must be brought down from heaven, through prayer. Your family can't then live without prayer. And therefore, prayer must be a key element of Family Worship.

IAN MACLEOD

Well, prayer has a very central part in Family Worship, and indeed in family life. There's a verse at the end of Jeremiah 10, verse 25: "For the Lord says, pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." The families who do not call upon the name of the Lord, the families who do not pray to the Lord are considered along with the heathen who do not know the Lord at all.

But positively then, the church in the home—there ought to be, and ought to breath in an atmosphere of prayer and praise. And here I think we should remember that it is *Family* Worship. There's certainly a place for praying for others, for the needs of the local congregation, for the needs of the church at large, for the world situation, for our country, our president, and so on. But we also have to remember, it is *Family* Worship. We have needs in our family. We have concerns in our family. We have family sins that we need to identify, and confess, and repent of. And so, we're coming, asking for forgiveness for our sins. We're coming with thanksgiving for mercies that have been received by us as a family. We're coming for requests that pertain to us as a family, for greater love for one another, for example, and so on. And in this way, Family Worship has prayer, and breaths in the atmosphere of prayer and praise.

And I think it's also worth noting how great an encouragement it is to any pastor to know that the families of the congregation are praying for him, praying for the ministry of the Word, praying for the blessing of the Spirit, that the Word would not come as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the Word of God. And that the families are doing that every day, that the fathers are leading the whole family to pray for a blessing upon their own souls and upon the souls of others. That is a great blessing to a pastor. As the old saying goes, a praying people make a preaching pastor.

MAURICE ROBERTS

Well, prayer is one of the elements in all true worship, of course, and in Family Worship, it is especially important in this sense, that it means that the head of the family—the husband—will lead in prayer, and he will take into his prayers the needs of his wife, and of the children, and of the wider family circle, perhaps not those in the immediate household, but in the wider family circle, and in this way, all the people in the family will show kindness and concern for one another, and for those who are in the wider family circle. And in that way, their prayers for the people in the family are teaching them to pray in their own secret prayer time, for those in the family. So the whole family is praying for one another.

ROBERT McCURLEY

Family Worship provides the ideal setting for children learning to pray. Where is it that they're instructed? Well, they're instructed in what they're taught from Scripture, but it's also modeled for them within the home on a daily basis. And parents come alongside them, and begin to assist them in understanding how it is that we formulate our thoughts in addressing the Lord, and the things that we bring to him. It also creates an environment within the home that can be fairly exciting, because as a family, the children are coming to the Lord and petitioning him for certain things. Well, what does that do? That creates anticipation, so that children are now watching and looking to see the Lord fulfill the answer to those prayers. And in seeing that, it's a means, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, that can actually strengthen and quicken faith. And so there's many different levels and dynamics in which prayer functions within the household. They're learning to address God in terms of adoration, and speaking to God about God, ascribing to him the glory that is due to his name, learning to confess their sins before him, learning to seek his favor and blessing on the needs that they have. All of this creates an atmosphere of God-consciousness that can be carried through the day with the children.

GRAEME CRAIG

Well, obviously prayer is essential. In Family Worship, the value of prayer in worship is we actually take the real needs and desires of our children and bring them before God. The children will be speaking of something that's bothering them, about something that they desire—well, let's take it to the Lord in prayer. And if we are being thoughtful and pastoral in our dealing with our children, or indeed there may be grown up adults who are part of our family, then we will pray for them. There are family needs, family concerns, family thanksgivings, and we can relate it to them. The minister's prayer will be general, and we're not to follow his pattern in that regard. We may be very simple, because we are dealing with young children. We'd be more theological or devotional because we have older children or adult children, or it might just be a husband and wife. But we deal with our needs, and it makes it more real to them. "This is something that I'm involved in." And at the end of the day, just as when the pastor prays, or anyone leads in prayer in church, you and I have to put our "Amen" to it, so they're children, and you have to remember these things as we pray.

MICHAEL SPANGLER

So prayer in Family Worship is very important. It's what we conclude our Family Worship with. It's what we sometimes end up spending the most time on, and it's a way as a family that we offer our needs before the Lord. He's promised to meet them if we ask. He tells us to bring our needs to him in prayer, and we have seen great blessing from our prayer. I think prayer is so

central to Family Worship that it's right that some people would call all Family Worship "family prayers," and that's right. We ought to be, as a family, lifting up our needs, our praises, our thanks, our confessions to God.

WILLIAM MACLEOD

Prayer is vitally important in Family Worship. I think it's important for us to bring before the Lord the needs of our family, to pray for each one, to pray for those who are not at home, to pray for the family circle, to pray for the church, and to pray for the nation. Indeed, we need to pray for our world. Now I think it's also good in Family Worship that each member of the family should pray in turn. I think it's good to have little children addressing God in their prayers, and talking about the things they need. So I think it's good that we pray, that we all pray, and in that way, we give thanks to God for the good things in life, we praise God for all he does for us, for the glory that belongs to him, confess our sins, and we intercede and plead for the things that we need, and the things that will be beneficial for ourselves, for our church, and for our world.

SERMON REVIEW

ROBERT McCURLEY

As a father is sitting under the preaching of the Word, he is receiving God's Word for his own soul. But he should also have an eye on how that Word might be applicable, generally, to the family. And so, whether through taking notes or laying up in his memory, he needs to retain what has been preached—maybe the primary points of the sermon, or other things that stood out to him under those points. Then he can sit down with his family and go over what they've heard. It may involve asking the children, you know, "What were the main points of the sermon?" He may ask them, "What were particular things, maybe one thing that stood out to you most, in what we heard?" "How can we seek to implement and apply the things that we've heard?" What does this do? This massages the preached Word into the souls of the family members. Remember Jesus warns us of sowing the seed, and how the devil will come like the fowls of the air and pluck the seed out and carry it away. Well, one way to prevent that is to bury that seed deeper into the soil of our souls. And so, as we review and reflect after the preaching of the Word, that Word is retained more firmly in the hearts of our family members.

IAN MACLEOD

Sermon review can also be incorporated into Family Worship. It's good for parents, before the Lord's Day morning service, to read the chapter of the Bible that is going to be read and preached about, if they know what that is, of course. And certainly after public worship, families can come on the Lord's Day, and there's more time for these activities on the Lord's Day, and they can ask their children what did they hear. Even for children, knowing that these questions are going to come, they are likely to make them listen better in church. But then, at home, you can really flesh out and apply directly to your children what they have heard about God, about Christ, about sin, about salvation.

MAURICE ROBERTS

Well, a good way of doing this, I would say, is when the head of the family, the father, is conducting Family Worship, he can read a bit of the Bible, sing a few of the Psalms, and he can

pray, but then, before they get up and walk away, he can say to the children, “Well, my dear, do you remember the minister was talking about something the other day, which is called limited atonement. Have you any idea, children, what that means?” “No, Dad, we don’t.” Well, you can then explain it. I simply think that is one example of very, very many. And the children might need to be taught, “Why is it a serious thing to die as an unbeliever?” And you can ask the children, “Why is it a serious thing to be an unbeliever when you come to face death?” And the children may have a good answer, or they may not. But we can talk about it together, and lovingly, and gently, and quietly, in simple language. And make it clear that the children realize that to die without faith in Christ is the most serious thing of all.

WILLIAM MACLEOD

I think the Family Worship on Sunday could be a bit longer, and I think it would be good to go over the sermons on Sunday, and to ask questions, and try and remember the main points of the sermon. And in that way, the sermons that they hear will be settled in the mind and memory of our children, and of ourselves as parents.

MICHAEL SPANGLER

Sermon review is important in Family Worship, especially after the Lord’s Day, or on the Lord’s Day. So in my family, every Sunday evening, in our evening Family Worship, I have a notebook with my notes that I’ve made in church. I try to take a few points of practice down from the sermon. And then we read the passage, or a portion of the passage, at least one of them from our two services, and then we talk, as much as time allows, about one sermon or the other, often, a little bit of both. The great advantage is, you can remember the sermon better, and you can make sure to address any issues that weren’t understood, especially in the children. But even more, is the practical application. The pastor, we hope, is laboring, and we benefit from a very practical ministry. He’s laboring to apply the text to us, but that application should only be the beginning, because now we have to take that and put it into the details of our individual lives. Family Worship becomes a great bridge from the public worship to the individual life, in which especially I as the father, knowing the condition of my children and my wife, I can help them think themselves about how to live according to what we heard. It becomes a very fruitful exercise, on the Lord’s Day especially.

GAVIN BEERS

When we eat our food, it’s not only important to ingest that food—by that I mean, put it into our mouth, and you chew and swallow it. It’s also vital that we digest our food. And one of the great dangers of the Christian life is that we’re always putting food in, but we’re not spending sufficient time to digest that food. And as a result of that, we simply don’t benefit from all the spiritual food that we take in. That’s why it’s very important that we set aside time for meditation in our own private lives. But one way that we can meditate together is by coming as a family to review sermons. Now that might look different in different families. But one thing that we’ve implemented in my own family over many years is that, on the Lord’s Day evening, in our family time together, we don’t take in any more of the Bible. But what we do is we require each family member to bring out one thing from the morning service, and another thing from the evening service, and as they do that, what we discover is that the sermon is being replayed in our minds, and the rest of the family are benefiting from what the other family members say. Sometimes

they get frustrated if they have something to say, and somebody says it before them. But then it challenges them to think about something else. And so together, we're rehearsing the things that we have heard out of the Word of the Lord.

In our congregation, we also have the benefit of a midweek meeting, and we do the same thing. The next morning, we get up and gather as a family, and we go over the things that we heard. So ingestion—eating our food—is good, but we have to digest the things that we've heard, and sermon review is a very helpful tool to do that.