

“Priests in Their Home”: The Reformation’s Impact upon Parenthood

Redeemer Lutheran Church, Marshalltown, Iowa, October 14, 2017

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Hausvater Project: www.hausvater.org • Bethany Lutheran College: www.blc.edu/history-major

- The Lutheran Reformation placed a renewed focus on the vocations of marriage and parenthood.
 - **Vocation:** how your station in life serves as a channel of God’s blessings to the people around you (e.g., God blesses children *by means of* the office of parenthood).
 - Luther wrote the Small Catechism for use by both **the Hausvater** (head of the family) and the pastor.
 - Lutherans sang hymns in their homes (especially when political strife forced churches “underground”).
 - Luther called dads and moms “priests in their home,” for they proclaim the Gospel to their children.
- Every family has an altar—the questions are: To which god? and, How often is it used?
 - Noah (Gen 8:20), Abraham (Gen 12:7), Isaac (Gen 26:25), and Jacob (Gen 33:20) built altars to the Lord, as did Moses (Exo 17:15), Joshua (Jos 8:30), Gideon (Jdg 6:24), Samuel (1 Sm 7:17), and David (2 Sm 24:25).
 - God repeatedly commanded that altars to false gods be torn down.
 - After times of idolatry, the altars to the true God had to be rebuilt.
 - Have you torn down the altars in your home devoted to false gods? Have you built an altar to the true God? (Our Lutheran fathers called their family devotion space and time “the family altar.”)
- Treasuring the Unique Benefits of God’s Word: *Holy Scripture is God’s inspired, inerrant, infallible, complete, preserved, and efficacious Word revealing Christ as Savior. (Sola Scriptura)*
 - *God’s:* Jer 23:28; 1 Co 2:13; Gal 1:11–12; 1 Th 2:13; 2 Pt 1:16,18
 - *Inspired:* Mt 22:43; 2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:20–21
 - *Inerrant:* Ps 12:6; Jn 10:35; Jn 8:31–32; Gal. 3:16
 - *Infallible:* Jos 21:45, cf. 23:14; 1 Kgs 8:56; Ps 77:8; Isa 34:16; Mt 5:18; 2 Co 1:20; Heb 10:23; 2 Pt 3:9,13
 - *Complete:* Dt 12:32; Mt 28:20; Rev 22:18–19
 - *Preserved:* Ps 12:7; Isa 40:8; Mt 24:35; 1 Pt 1:22–25, quoting Isa 40:8
 - *Efficacious:* Isa 55:11; Jn 8:31–32; Jn 17:20; Ro 10:14,17; Heb 4:12; 2 Pt 3:5–7; Rev 1:3
 - **Revealing Christ as Savior:** Mt 5:17; Jn 5:39; Jn 20:30–31; Gal 3:22,24–25; 2 Tm 3:15 (**Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus**)
- Training Your Children with a Christian Home Library:
 - Core Curriculum: the Bible, the Hymnal, and the Catechism.
 - God has ordained every family to be a “home school” family at some level.
 - Take primary responsibility for your children’s “education” (whether or not you enroll them in “school”). Consider Luther’s Large Catechism, concerning the Fourth Commandment: “First of all, they [parents] should earnestly and faithfully discharge their office, not only to support and provide for the bodily necessities of their children, servants, subjects, etc., but, most of all, to train them to the honor and praise of God.” (LC, I, 168)
 - Bible History reveals that children and grandchildren suffer when parents neglect to train their children in the way of the Lord.
 - Research reveals that youth leave the church unless their *fathers*, in particular, take an active role in mentoring them in the Christian faith—*before* adolescence.
 - The challenges are severe, but God’s Word abounds with promises to bless His people.
 - Fathers are evangelists in their homes (Dt 6:6–7; Ps 44:1, 48:13, 78:5–7; Pr 22:6; Mal 2:15 (esp. NKJV); Ac 2:38–39; Eph 6:4)—note esp. how Dt 6 and Eph 6 echo each other, connecting OT and NT teaching.
- *Leave an everlasting legacy:* Bless your children, your children’s children, and your children’s children’s children (Gen 49:1–28). (What a privilege parents have to attach God’s name and God’s blessings to their children as they bring them to the church to be baptized and as they instruct them in God’s Word daily at home, just as the pastor teaches the whole family along with the congregation!)

Encouragement and Suggestions for Family Devotions from the Hausvater Project

- From the Hausvater Project vision statement (www.hausvater.org/about):
 - “that husbands lead their families in home devotions, regular church attendance, catechetical instruction, and lifelong Christian discipleship”
 - “that parents take active and primary roles in the Christian upbringing and general education of their children”
- Feature articles (www.hausvater.org/articles):
 - “Constructing a Family Altar Board,” by Marie MacPherson
 - “The Father as Mentor to His Sons: 10 Topics for Man-to-Man Discussion,” by Douglas Lindee
 - “Laying the Foundation for a Christian Home Library,” by Ryan MacPherson
 - “A Mother’s Journey into Homeschooling,” by Danielle M. Olson
 - “Discipleship in the Christian Home: An Historical Perspective,” by Ryan MacPherson
 - “Family Worship: Biblical Suggestions for Your Home,” by Jeremie and Molly Schulz
 - “Raising Children in the Paideia of the Lord,” by Erich Heidenreich
 - “‘Talk of Them When You Sit in Your House’: A Father Shares His Family’s ‘Deuteronomy 6’ Experiences,” by Emil B. Huntington
- Audio Archives from the 2013 Fall Bible Institute (www.hausvater.org/events/275)
- Book Reviews (www.hausvater.org/book-reviews):
 - “A Hausmutter Reading List,” a review of several books, by Marie MacPherson
 - “Dads, It’s Time to Read God’s Word to Your Family,” a review of Rob Otto’s *Rise Up!: For Dads Who Want to Lead Boldly*, by John Merseith, Jr.
 - “Equipping Men to Shepherd Their Families for Christ,” a review of Voddie Baucham’s *Family Shepherds*, by Ryan MacPherson
- “Luther’s Evening Prayer (Chant),” composed by Christina Harman (free music score in PDF download, plus a performance recording, at www.hausvater.org/prayers)
- Bible Study Resources (www.hausvater.org/bible-studies):
 - “Discovering Your Vocations in the Family, Church, and Society” (4-part series, free PDF download)
 - “Every Thought Captive to Christ” (free PDF download): Suitable for both individual and group Bible studies, whether in the home or at church, the following questions, which put Law before Gospel and Justification before Sanctification, memorably spell C-A-P-T-I-V-E. It is through the study of Scripture that Christians learn to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:5).
 - **CONFESSION:** Of which sins does this passage convict me?
 - **ABSOLUTION:** How does this passage reveal God’s forgiveness for me in Christ?
 - **PRAYER:** For what does this passage instruct me to ask or thank God?
 - **TRADITION:** How has this passage inspired the creeds, confessions, liturgy, hymns, or catechism of my church?
 - **INTERPRETATION:** How do other passages help me to interpret this one? or How does this passage help me to interpret others?
 - **VOCATION:** How does this passage guide me in my life as a(n) [insert my station in life]?
 - **EVANGELISM:** How can I share with an unbeliever what this passage has taught me about God’s grace in Christ?
 - “A Four–Year Cycle for Christian Homes”: Take your family through the entire Bible in four years by reading just 20 to 25 verses per day! (A free 2–page PDF download provides details.)
 - **YEAR ONE:** Hebrew History
 - **YEAR TWO:** Minor Prophets and Christian History
 - **YEAR THREE:** Wisdom Literature and Major Prophets
 - **YEAR FOUR:** Old and New Testament Doctrine
 - ... and more at **www.hausvater.org**!