

Matthew Henry on Prayer in the Family

A Church in the House, A Sermon concerning Family-Religion,

by Matthew Henry

On April 16, 1604 Matthew Henry preached an abundantly practical sermon to the families gathered in his congregation. One part of the sermon was for equipping them for prayer in their households. Here they are

Five things especially you should have upon your heart in your family prayer, and should endeavor to bring something of each into every prayer with your families

1. You ought to make family-Acknowledgements on your Dependence upon God and his Providences as you are a family.

Our great business in all acts of religious worship is to give unto the Lord the Glory due unto his Name; and this we must do in our Family-Worship. Give honor to God as the Founder of Families by his Ordinance, because it was not good for man to be alone; as the founder of your Families by his Providence, for he it is that buildeth the House, and setteth the Solitary in Families. Give Honor to him as the owner and Ruler of families...

2. You ought to make Family-Confessions of your Sins against God; those Sins you have contracted the Guilt of your Family-Capacity...

How sad is the Condition of those Families that sin together, and never pray together, that by concurring in Frauds, Quarrels and Excesses, by Strengthening one another's Hands in Impiety and Profaneness, fill the measure of Family-Guilt, and never agree together to do any thing to empty it.'

And even Religious Families, that are not polluted with gross and scandalous Sins, yet have need to join every Day in the Solemn Acts and Expressions of Repentance before God for their Sins of daily infirmity. Their vain words, and unprofitable conversation among themselves; their manifold defects in relative duties, provoking one another's lusts or Passions, instead of provoking one another to Love, and to good Works.

3. You ought to offer up Family Thanksgivings for the blessings which you, with our Families, receive from God.

Many are the mercies which you enjoy the Sweetness and Benefit of in common; which if wanting to one, all the Family would be sensible of it. Hath not God made a Hedge of Protection about you and your houses and all that you have...

4. You ought to present your Family-Petitions for the Mercy and Grace which your Families stand in need of.

Daily Bread is received by Families together, and we are taught not only to pray for it every day, but to pray together for it, saying 'Our Father, give it us'. There are Affairs and Employments which the Family is jointly concerned in the Success of, and therefore should jointly ask of God Wisdom for the Management of them, and Prosperity therein. There are family cares to be cast upon God, by Prayer, Family Comforts to be fought for, and Family-Crosses which they should together beg for the Sanctification and Removal of.

5. You ought to make Family-Intercessions for others also.

There are Families you stand related to, or which by Neighborhood, Friendship or Acquaintance, you become interested in and acquaintance, you become interested in, and concern's for... The Benefit of Prayer will reach far, because he that hears Prayer can extend His hand of Power and Mercy to the utmost Corners of the Earth, and to them that are afar off upon the Sea."