

Life Seminar 2014: Marriage, Family, and Evangelism

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SESSION 1

The Family Altar: The Necessity and Benefit of Home Devotions

- Introduction
 - Baptism: How Christ came to me ...
 - Bible Reading: How the Holy Spirit has preserved my faith and equipped me to serve others ...
 - “Hausvater”: Becoming a spiritually responsible head of household ...
- 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.
 - God’s: Jer 23:28; 1 Co 2:13; Gal 1:11-12; 1 Th 2:13; 1 Tm 5:18, quoting Lk 10:7; 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
 - Infallible: Jos 21:45, cf. 23:141 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
- Receiving God’s Gifts as a Family in the Divine Service:
 - There can be no Christian family, no Christian anything, apart from Word and Sacrament.
 - Whether as a household of one, or of twenty-one, let the Divine Service set the rhythm.
- Training Your Children with a Christian Home Library:
 - God has ordained every family to be a “home school” family at some level.
 - Bible History reveals that children and grandchildren suffer when parents neglect to train their children in the way of the Lord.
 - Recent research (Barna surveys, etc.) reveal that youth leave the church unless their fathers, in particular, take an active role in mentoring them in the Christian faith.
 - The challenges are severe, but God’s Word abounds with promises to bless His people.
 - Core Curriculum: the Bible, the Hymnal, and the Catechism.
- Holding Your Family Together in Christ at the Family Altar (see p. 4 for suggestions)

SESSION 2

Marriage: The Divinely Established Life-Long Union Celebrating Sexual Complementarity, Children, and Chastity

- From Natural Law (and Scripture, too):
 - Marriage is the divinely established (Gen 2:18) life-long union (Mt 19:4-6) celebrating sexual complementarity (Gen 1:27), children (Gen 1:28), and chastity (Gen 2:25).
 - Pagans can, and should, recognize the natural family, even apart from Scripture.
- From Scripture Alone:
 - Marriage proclaims the love of Christ for the Church and echoes the submission of the Church to her Head, the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 5:22-33).
 - Submission does not deny equality (Athanasian Creed; 1 Co 11:3; Php 2:6-7).
 - Christ Himself is both the perfect Head (Eph 5:23) and the perfect Submitter (Lk 22:42).
 - Marital parenthood is the primary means for evangelizing the next generation (Dt 6:6-7; Ps 78:5-7; Pr 22:6; Mal 2:15; Ac 2:38-39; Eph 6:4).
- From Luther's Large Catechism:

"God has instituted marriage before all other estates, and therefore created man and woman separately (as is evident), not for lewdness, but that they should legitimately live together, be fruitful, beget children, and nourish and train them to the honor of God." (Sixth Commandment, LC I, 207)
- Preserving Your Marriage through Christ-centered Love and Respect:
 - Ephesians 5:33—"Let each one of you [husbands] in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."
 - Avoid the "Crazy Cycle" and enjoy the "Rewarded Cycle" (Emerson Eggerichs, *Love and Respect*, reviewed by Pr. Jonathan Conner at www.hausvater.org/book-reviews).
- "Bring[ing Children] Up in the Training and Admonition of the Lord" (Eph 6:4):
 - Training (*paideia*): "instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16); "chastening" (Hebrews 12:5,7,8,11); a well-rounded education promoting character development (Greco-Roman)
 - Admonition (*nouthesia*): "examples . . . written for our admonition" (1 Co 10:11); "reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition" (Titus 3:10); literally, "reasoning" (*nous* = mind) with people so that they may recognize God's good and gracious will
 - Modeling by example—the "working, teaching father" who involves his children in meaningful labor that serves others as a thank offering to God who has forgiven us.

SESSION 3

Postmodern Society: Understanding the Abortion Controversy in America

- "Postmodernism" = a philosophical movement from the past 50 to 100 years that promotes skepticism concerning knowledge, aesthetics, and morality.
 - Postmodernism denies that anything can be objectively true or false, wholesome or offensive, right or wrong. So, postmodernism means whatever *you* think it means.
 - Objective truth, by contrast, is a truth not of our own making—for example, true or false, or good or evil, because God has so determined it and no matter what anyone else thinks of it.
- *Two mini presentations*:
 - "Ten Surprising Facts concerning the Abortion Controversy in America"
 - "God's Life-Giving Gospel Is Active at Conception"

SESSION 4

The Gospel of Life: Sharing the Good News of Forgiveness in Christ

- Where does evangelism fit within your vocation?
 - Called to be an evangelist? (Eph 4:11–16)
 - Called to be a parent? (Eph 6:4)
 - Called to be “salt” and “light” for those whom God places in your midst? (Mt 5:13–16)
- Be aware of what others may “hear” when you speak—based on their prior encounters with particular terms (adapted from Carl Medearis, *Speaking of Jesus*):
 - Is “church” a place full of hypocrites?
 - Is “Christianity” an intolerant religion that oppresses minorities?
 - Are “pro-lifers” insensitive to the complexities of people’s everyday lives?
 - Are “conservatives” and “traditionalists” trying to tell others how to run their lives?
 - Was “St. Paul” a misogynist?
 - Are “Lutherans” a liberal movement that approves of abortion and homosexuality and denies the biblical account of creation?
 - Are “confessional Lutherans” people who place church traditions above God’s Word?
 - But “Jesus of Nazareth” was a loving, caring man—the best friend anyone could every have; so, start with “Jesus” and be careful about how you introduce other vocabulary.
- When in doubt, tell a story—and connect it to The Story
 - Jesus, the storyteller: His parables turned every earthly occasion into a heavenly lesson.
 - But many people find excuses not to listen:
 - Apologetics might help when a person is seriously willing to debate the matter.
 - But, a story might interest those who otherwise are too stubborn to listen.
 - Example: Dr. Bernard Nathanson, the “Abortion King” who became a forgiven child of God and pro-life advocate.
 - Keep in mind what really holds people back: guilt and fear; and keep in mind that the Gospel offers forgiveness and peace through Jesus Christ.
- Keep your eyes on the prize:
 - Evangelism means proclaiming the Good News that Christ has defeated sin, death, and the devil for us and given us forgiveness, new life, and eternal salvation.
 - Other “outreach” efforts may have a time and place, but do not confuse them for evangelism.
 - Focus your message on the Gospel:
 - Hab 2:2,
“Write the vision
And make it plain on tablets,
That he may run who reads it.”
 - Example: “Peace with God through Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1)

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):
 - “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.
 - “The Love a Wife Desires, the Respect a Husband Needs,” a review of Emerson Eggerich’s *Love and Respect*, by Jonathan Conner
- Bible Study Resources (www.hausvater.org/bible-studies):
 - “Every Thought Captive to Christ”: 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 verse per day! (A free PDF download provides further 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