

I am going to speak for a few minutes about how God has reformed my family. God has been so good to us to change us, to mold us more into the image of Jesus Christ, to reform our theology, our thinking and our practices.

I Three Key Elements of Orthodoxy that God used to bring Family Reformation

A) Sovereignty of God:

1) What is this doctrine? The doctrine teaches that God is sovereign over every sphere of life and over every event that takes place. There is nothing that occurs that surprises Him, and he is the one who causes everything that takes place. He orchestrates all events for his own glory. The Shorter Catechism, question 7 asks the following:

Q. 7. What are the decrees of God?

A. The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

2) I was taught as a child that God had perfect knowledge of future events. I was not taught however that he is in direct control of all events, "foreordaining whatsoever comes to pass". There is a huge difference between "knowing what is going to happen" and being the "primary cause of the event". This doctrine has allowed my family to have much joy in the midst of tremendous trials, knowing that God is sovereign over all events and that the trial we are in will be used for His glory.

B) The Sufficiency of Scripture

1) This is the doctrine that Scripture is sufficient for every area of life, whether it is how to educate your children, how you should manage your finances or how church should be organized.

2) God reformed my thinking in the area of the sufficiency of scripture and led to many great changes in our family. We found that we do not need to run to the latest Christian self-help best seller to "have our best life now" or to find a "purpose driven life." We need to turn to scripture, not the latest invention from the mind of man. We need to know the mind of God on every issue and we find that in the scriptures. Scripture is sufficient.

C) Regulative Principle of Worship

Later in the day Jason will have a talk on this subject but I just want to speak for a moment about how God reformed our family with the Regulative Principle of Worship.. It means that God chooses how He is to be worshipped! The creature does not get to dictate how the creator is to be worshipped. That is madness! How can the creature say to the creator, "This is how I'm going to worship you and you are gonna like it!"

Again God used the study of his Word and the preaching of His Word to reform our thinking in this area. This doctrine had a huge impact on my family. My wife and I were very active in our church, which was program driven, and at one point we realized we were making 8 trips to church a week at 50 minutes per roundtrip to participate in films, dramas, skits and all other kinds of programs used to worship God. . That is almost 7 hrs a week in the car, not to mention all the time spent at the church. How can anyone afford to give up that much time and still disciple their children? We tried to redeem the time as best we could but dropping the baggage of all of these programs was a such a tremendous blessing for us, it was like a breath of fresh air. We were able to be more diligent in teaching the Word of God to our children.

II Specific areas in which God has reformed my family's practices

A) Education

Before God reformed our family in the area of education we were homeschooling our children. After God reformed our family we were still homeschooling. So what is the difference, where was the reformation? The difference is the reason WHY we are homeschooling. We started out homeschooling for pragmatic reasons, better test scores, better academics etc. After God reformed our family here, through the preaching of the word, and an understanding of the sufficiency of scripture in the area of education, our reasons for homeschooling changed. No longer are we homeschooling for pragmatic reasons, but rather now we are homeschooling out of obedience to God and a desire to glorify Him. And this difference is huge, because when the wind and waves come, and the trials of homeschooling come as they always do we don't start looking for the exit. We know that we are in it for the long haul and that no matter what obstacles we face we know we must persevere by God's grace. God continues to work on this area in our life. Homeschooling is not just about better academics, it is about my wife and I teaching our children to love God with all their heart soul mind and strength and teaching them to glorify God with their lives.

B) Who Controls the womb

God was really working in our lives and changing not just our view on education and church practices but also our view on children and Who is in control of the womb. I had a vasectomy in 2000. God used His word and the faithful preaching of his word change our heart and show us that He is in control of the womb. So I had a reversal almost 4 years ago. God has been so good to us as he blessed us by giving us two more children, Bradford Seth who is almost 3 and Abigail Patience who is 5 months old as well as two other children that He chose to take home to heaven.

PS 127: Behold, Children are a heritage from the Lord; The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like Arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gates.

I am so thankful that God has changed our hearts and reformed my family with regard to His sovereignty over the womb.

c) The third area that God reformed our family is in Family Worship.

God has reformed our family in the area of family worship and family integration. Let me be clear: Family worship is not the worship of the family. It is a father gathering his family daily to worship God. I had been attending Southern Baptist mega-churches since the early 90s and not once did I hear the term family worship. The constant exhortation in each of these churches was for each person to have a "quiet time" which is a very individualistic practice. Never was there any exhortation for fathers to lead their family in family worship of God.

After my wife and I got married we spent a number of years as nursery workers, Sunday School teachers, Awana teachers and just about every children's ministry position you can imagine. We initially got involved out of necessity as my 18 month old daughter had no nursery worker. From that point on, we always taught one of our daughters in the nursery, kindergarten or first grade Sunday school classes. When they moved up, we moved up, until my 2nd daughter Jessie moved up to 2nd grade and we stayed back in the first grade.

At this point, we were left teaching ~20 or so children that weren't ours. As I taught this Sunday school class, I realized that 90% of them were not being taught the Bible at home. And this included children of church leaders who were not discipling their own children. I remember thinking, why am I teaching this man's child? He's obviously not doing it at home. Where is the cry from the pulpit, "Fathers, teach your children!"? It was nowhere to be heard and it was not being done.

This is where God started moving in our lives, using our Jessie as the catalyst. As we would drop off her off at her 2nd grade Sunday School class, she would turn to us with tears in her eyes saying, "Daddy, please don't make me go. I just want to be with you!" My response to this was, "Hey everyone goes to Sunday school, that's what we do." This went on, week after week. It was very difficult dropping her off as it just ripped our hearts out to hear this. My answer to her was "this is what we do", but I was questioning WHY do we do this?

So I made a deal with her. I told her that we would let her start coming with us into our first grade class and she could be our helper once a month. Well, soon my older daughter Brittany and son Nathan were joining us and as we would teach the first graders as a family.

While all this was going on, I was spending many hours studying the Bible and listening to expository preaching on family integration and family worship. I was trying to answer the question “Why is it that we do this”? Just like before, God was using His word to change us and reform us. My quandry at the time was do we leave our current church for a family integrated church or should we stay at our program driven church and be a small island of family integration in a sea of age segregation. This is a very difficult question to grapple with. After much prayer and seeking God's will over a 9 month period we felt His call to leave our program driven church and move to Hope Baptist Church in Wake Forest where Scott and Jason were elders.

After my family moved there, it became very apparent that there was no passing the buck to someone else with respect to discipling your children. As Scott and Jason would frequently say, “If you aren't discipling your children then it's not getting done because it isn't our job. “ Fathers, we are operating without a safety net here! There is no plan B!

Fathers, if there is one thing you take away from this time, it is this: You must be pouring the Word of God into your wife and children on a daily basis. If you are not doing this, then you are failing in your most important job as a father.

How do I do this with my family? We keep it very simple. We read straight through the Bible, reading 3-4 chapters every day along with a chapter of proverbs. We sing hymns and we spend time in prayer, and we work on scripture memorization. Remember, this is a marathon, not a sprint. Consistency is the key. Pour the word of God daily into your childrens lives.

Here are two of the flagship passages for family discipleship:

Deuteronomy 6:7 - You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Fathers, do not delegate the spiritual training of your children to the youth pastor, the children's church worker or the Sunday school teacher. It is your job! You cannot give it to somebody else. You cannot delegate it to your wife! You will give an account to God for the way in which you carry out this task.

Fathers, are you bringing your children up in the training and admonition of the Lord? Are you teaching your children diligently about the things of God? If not, then REPENT! Do it right now! Fall on your face before God and cry out for his forgiveness. Start family worship of God today.

Here is a very sobering thought, men:

Somebody is discipling your children. The question is, "WHO is discipling your children?" Is it Hollywood? Is it TV? Is it the internet? Or is it you, their father, lovingly, faithfully and diligently reading the word of God to them day after day, spending time in prayer, and singing hymns, and catechizing these precious gifts from the Lord.

Make sure your family is hearing the word of God every day. It will bring reformation to your family, just as it has brought reformation to mine.

I'll leave you with one last question:

Who is discipling your children?