

The Why and How of
Home Church

The following material is a resource of the Restoration School of Biblical Studies.

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Personal Introduction

Every Sunday, as family and friends gather in my parent's tiny house for worship, I thank God for the simple profoundness of that context. I am especially drawn to the impact it is having in the life of my grandson, Judah (age 7).

Every week, Judah is immersed in the living experiences of holiness from the home.

- He is inspired to be like his daddy as Bryson leads our worship.
- He is drawn to snuggle up next to his mother as Victoria offers prayers.
- He is validated by helping GramGram prepare the communion box.
- He is impacted by the voice of his aged great grandmother as she takes her turn in the circle of Scripture readers.
- He is excited to quote the books of the Bible while his biggest fans cheer him on.
- He is humbled by the short walk to the bedroom so he can lead great grandpa in a communion moment by his hospital bed.
- He is emboldened by the security of family, being surrounded with over 113 years of marital faithfulness.
- He is in awe as he speaks of Uncle Gabriel in heroic tones. The empty chair means that "Uncle" is on another mission trip to a third-world country.

And the list goes on!

Sure, many of these things could also be experienced inside a cold auditorium that is designed for large groups, but it just wouldn't be the same! The living home experiences that are now shaping Judah's understanding of the church will, no doubt, carry him through adulthood.

Every week, family and friends anxiously gather at his great grandma's old country table. "Mmm! I'm so hungry!" rings out against the echoes of laughter and agreement. Every week, Judah sees the church naturally move from the table to the tiny living room. Discussions continue. Topics overlap. Life leads us into praise. Continuity between the interaction surrounding a home cooked meal and the intimacy of a home-centered worship is inescapable.

Conclusion: There should be little wonder why home church was the dominant pattern of assemblies for the early Christians. It should also be of no surprise that there is not a single hint of the early Christians investing in a cold, institutionalized church building.

Imagine the impact of growing up in a context where worship is a natural extension of the home!

It's time to restore the clear, New Testament pattern of home church!



Lesson 1

We should restore the home church because it is the New Testament Pattern.

If we truly want to be restoration Christians, we must not ignore one of the most established New Testament examples of the early church – home church assemblies.

There is not one example, not one admonition, not one hint that the first century church owned or ever intended to invest in a church building. On the other hand, there are repeated references to the early church prioritizing the essential simplicity of home church gatherings.

Please take time to read each of the following passages and ask yourself what they say about the priorities of the early Christians.

Acts 2:42-47 - Early church, Jerusalem
Acts 5:42 - Apostles, Jerusalem
Acts 10:24-48 - Cornelius, Caesarea
Acts 12:12 - Mary mother of John, Jerusalem
Acts 16:15 - Lydia, Phillipi
Acts 16:31-34 - Jailer, Phillipi
Acts 16:40 - Lydia, Phillipi
Acts 18:7 - Titius Justus, Corinth
Acts 18:26 - Aquila and Priscilla, Ephesus
Acts 20:20 - Paul, Ephesus
Acts 28:30 - Paul, Rome
Romans 16:5 - Aquila and Priscilla
1 Corinthians 16:19 - Aquila and Priscilla, Ephesus
Colossians 4:15 - Nympha, Laodicea
Philemon 1:2 - Apphia and Archippus, Probably Colosse

Application: We have one potential example of the early church taking communion every Sunday. (Acts 20:7) On the other hand, we have over 15 obvious examples of the early church meeting in homes or borrowed spaces. Important Question: Why do so many make communion on Sunday an issue of fellowship even though there is only one potential example, yet they disregard the home church assembly which has over 15 clear biblical examples?

Conclusion: There is not a single command, not a single example, not a single necessary inference to validate our enormous investments in church buildings. Is the dominant use of church buildings really in line with the New Testament pattern?

Questions for Lesson 1:

1. How many examples does the New Testament provide of the early Christians dedicating funds to the construction of a church building?
2. How many examples were provided in this lesson of the early Christians meeting in homes?
3. Can you name one Jerusalem home in which the early church met? (Acts 12:12)
4. What famous couple is mentioned more than once as hosting the home church? (Acts 18:26; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19)
5. Where is the single example we have of the early church potentially taking communion on Sunday?

Lesson 2

We should restore the home church, because it is the clear example left by the first century Christians.

The only New Testament book which is dedicated entirely to the history of the early church offers a unique insight into the importance of the home church.

Read Acts 2:41-47 (ESV) and notice these words:

“three thousand souls” – Even though the early church started out as a mega-church, they continued to meet in homes.

“all who believed were together and had all things in common” - Even though the early church believed in sharing space and resources, they also believed in the importance of multiple home church gatherings throughout the city.

“attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes” - Even though the early church met together daily, they did so in homes and borrowed spaces.

“having favor with all the people” – Even though the early church grew rapidly and was popular among the people, the lack of persecution did not prompt them to build a permanent structure as an evangelistic tool.

Read Acts 4:32-35 (ESV) and notice these words:

“those who believed were of one heart and soul” - Even though the early church had great unity, they did not depend upon a church building to bring that about.

“There was not a needy person among them” - Even though the early church had a booming benevolent program, they evidently did so from their homes and public facilities.

“as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need” - Even though the Apostles were fantastic fundraisers, they did not take time to raise funds for structures.

Read Acts 6:1-3 (ESV) and notice these words:

“pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.” - Even though the early church was organized with deacons and service programs, there was evidently no need for a church building.

Read Acts 14:21-23 (ESV) and notice these words:

“strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith” – Even though the early church sent out missionaries who established many churches, their gospel message evidently did not include any encouragement to build a church building.

“when they had appointed elders for them in every church” - Even though the early church was organized with elders, these men were not led to build structures to host church assemblies.

Read Acts 15:5-6 (ESV) and notice these words:

“gathered together to consider this matter.” - Even though the early church had to host such events as “The Jerusalem Council,” they found a way to do so without a church building.

Read Acts 17:22-24 (ESV) and notice these words:

“Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: ... ‘Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man’” - Even though the early church had the opportunity to validate the structures of men, they did just the opposite.

Read Acts 20:7 (ESV) and notice these words:

“On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread” - Even though the early church left us this single example of communion on Sunday, their multiple examples of home church gatherings far outnumber the Sunday communion example 15 to 1.

Read Acts 28:16 (ESV) and notice these words:

“we came into Rome” - Even though the early church spread across the known world, the idea of church buildings did not follow them.

Conclusion: In spite of the fact that the early church had the inspired Apostles to organize benevolent programs, world-wide mission trips, and do prolific fundraisers, there is not a single hint that they were led by God to use His money for the construction of church buildings. Perhaps they saw how the Jews had become distracted by the temple, or perhaps they prophetically envisioned the structural idolatry which would come through the apostasy of Catholicism. Whatever the reason, the inspired writers of the New Testament gave zero attention to building buildings. They consistently met in homes or borrowed spaces. There is not one command, not one example, not one necessary inference to give authority to the construction of church buildings.

While it might be true that congregations have the liberty to build a functional building, good stewardship must first be applied and persistent diligence must govern that investment. One day we WILL give an account for the ways we used or abused God’s money.

Questions for Lesson 2:

1. What was the size of the mega-church in Jerusalem?
2. What phrase suggests that the early church did not meet in homes because of persecution? (Acts 2:47)
3. What important event did the Jerusalem church of Christ evidently host without the use of a church building? (Acts 15:5-6)
4. What did Paul say about temples made by hands or by men? (Acts 17:22-24)
5. How many commands, examples, and necessary inferences does the New Testament provide for church building construction?



Lesson 3

We should restore the home church, because the God-centered family is foundational to the church.

The home has always been God's foundational core group for both a functional culture and a vibrant church. Notice two examples.

1. The home defines our relationship to Christ. (Ephesians 5:22-33, ESV)

Read Ephesians 5:23 (ESV) and notice these words:

"For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church"
– The physical home setting provides a living illustration of Christ's headship. It is, therefore, the perfect context from which the spiritual family can grow.

Read Ephesians 5:24 (ESV) and notice these words:

"Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands." - The physical home setting provides a living illustration of submission and order. It is, therefore, the perfect context from which the spiritual family can grow.

Read Ephesians 5:25 (ESV) and notice these words:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" - The physical home setting provides a living illustration of true sacrifice and love. It is, therefore, the perfect context from which the spiritual family can grow.

Read Ephesians 5:26-27 (ESV) and notice these words:

"that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor" - The physical home setting provides a living illustration of purification and validation through education. It is, therefore, the perfect context from which the spiritual family can grow.

Read Ephesians 5:28-29 (ESV) and notice these words:

"In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body." - The physical home setting provides a living illustration of care and unity. It is, therefore, the perfect context from which the spiritual family can grow.

Read Ephesians 5:31-32 (ESV) and notice these words:

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. - The physical home setting provides a living illustration of positive division and autonomy. It is, therefore, the perfect context from which the spiritual family can grow.

2. The home develops and certifies the qualities of church leaders. (1 Timothy 3:1-7, 8-13; Titus 1:5-9, ESV)

Read 1 Timothy 3:2 (ESV) and notice the following words (See also 1 Timothy 3:12 and Titus 1:6):

“Therefore an overseer must be ... the husband of one wife” - The physical home setting provides a living confirmation of a man’s loyalty and ability to maintain fidelity. It is, therefore, the perfect context from which the spiritual family can grow.

Read 1 Timothy 3:2 (ESV) and notice the following words (See also Titus 1:8):

“Therefore an overseer must be ... hospitable” - The physical home is often the best setting to provide a living confirmation of a man’s generosity and willingness to care for strangers. It is, therefore, the perfect context from which the spiritual family can grow.

Read 1 Timothy 3:4-5 (ESV) and notice the following words (See also 1 Timothy 3:12):

“He must manage his own household well ... 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” - The physical home setting provides a living confirmation of a man’s leadership abilities. Notice the direct connection the Holy Spirit makes between a man’s general control of the home, and his qualification to manage church affairs. Home is the perfect context from which the spiritual family can grow.

Read 1 Timothy 3:4 (ESV) and notice the following words (See also 1 Timothy 3:12 and Titus 1:6):

“He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive” - The physical home setting provides a living confirmation of a man’s paternal skills. These are also essential qualifications for guiding the church, making the home a perfect context from which the spiritual family can grow.

Conclusion: Ever wonder why the home is used as the foundational illustration of the church (Ephesians 5:22-33)? Ever ask yourself why there is such a heavy emphasis on the qualifications of family success when choosing elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-7, 8-13; Titus 1:5-9)? Ever consider why widows who are supported by the church had to meet similar familial qualifications (1 Timothy 5:9-10)? We must restore the home church, because the God-centered family is absolutely foundational to the health of the church.

Questions for Lesson 3:

1. What has always been God’s foundational core group for both a functional culture and a vibrant church?
2. The home gives definition to what supreme relationship? (Ephesians 5:22-33)
3. Can you name three things in the church for which the physical home provides a living illustration?
4. When it comes to the qualities of church leaders, the home church provides development and what else? (1 Timothy 3:1-7, 8-13; Titus 1:5-9)
5. Besides elders and deacons, who else is to be judged by their familial qualifications? (1 Timothy 5:9-10)



Lesson 4

We should restore the home church, because large assemblies are not conducive to intimate fellowship and personal accountability.

RESTORation Christians need to return to the New Testament pattern of home churches, because we have traveled much too far away from the intimate examples of first century assemblies. The results are obvious.

Think about the following list of impersonal traditions which hinder us from finding deep levels of worship and intimate fellowship:

- Our large assemblies facilitate an acceptable escape from spiritually intimate interaction and accountability.
- Spiritual intimacy is defeated by sitting in pews facing the back of the heads of people in front of us.
- Our pre-programmed, pre-packaged elements of worship turns spiritual intimacy into sanitized robotic reactions.
- Spiritual intimacy is impeded by a single personality manipulating services off the wall or from behind a lofty, distant podium.
- Our investments become focused on maintenance projects and the construction of assembly halls which sit empty for the majority of the week.
- Attendance statistics become the treasured evidence of success rather than spiritual maturity through spiritual intimacy.
- Impersonal meeting halls lack the warmth of a home and the spiritual intimacy which can only be found when we open up our personal family space to the church family.

And the list goes on...

When confronted with the list above, those who are loyal to the traditions of large group assemblies often point to the crowd of over 3,000 in Act 2.

Acts 2:5-6, 41 (ESV) Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together ... 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Before we turn this passage into a standard-setting example of large group church assemblies, we need to ask a very important question - Was this event really a church assembly, or was it a crowd gathered out of curiosity? While it is true that many in the crowd eventually gave their life to Christ, there is no conclusive indication that after this event they went on to meet weekly in such numbers.

But what about Acts 2:46-47?

Acts 2:46-47 (ESV) And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

It is important to note, that even though they gathered daily in the temple, it does not say how they gathered in the temple. Was it in large groups, or was it in smaller groups scattered throughout the temple compound? The only real hint we have as an answer to this question is found in the next phrase, "breaking bread in their homes." Since we can know from that phrase that the early

Christians met in family size groups to break bread, it is also reasonable to conclude from that phrase that “in their homes” reflects the general size dynamic of their most intimate assemblies.

Additionally, if we conclude from Acts 20:7 that breaking bread refers to the Lord’s Supper, we could also conclude from Acts 2:46 that communion occurred in homes, not the temple. When the early Christians met for temple gatherings, whether their number was large or small, they did so in observance of the Old Law. (See also Acts 21:20.) On the other hand, when they met in home gatherings they did so in observance of the New Law. From the very beginning of the movement, small, intimate, home church gatherings were primary to the first century pattern of assembly styles. Is it possible that today’s church is completely upside down in its emphasis? While the early Christians may have met in large groups on occasion, small, family-size groups were clearly the most regularly used style of assemblies. What is most dominant today?

Conclusion: One is hard pressed to find a single example of regular large group gatherings in all of the New Testament record. While the early church definitely grew rapidly, the preponderance of evidence suggests that even the mega-church of Jerusalem divided itself into multiple home churches, so that intimate fellowship and personal accountability could be maintained. (Acts 2:46)

Questions for Lesson 4:

1. Can you list three reasons that large assemblies hinder the church from finding deep levels of worship and intimate fellowship?
2. Did the crowd of Acts 2 gather because it was a church assembly?
3. Does Acts 2:46-47 say that the early Christians gathered in large groups at the temple?
4. What was a typical size of assemblies in the Jerusalem church? (Acts 2:46)
5. How many examples do we have of the early Christians gathering in large numbers to observe the Lord’s Supper?



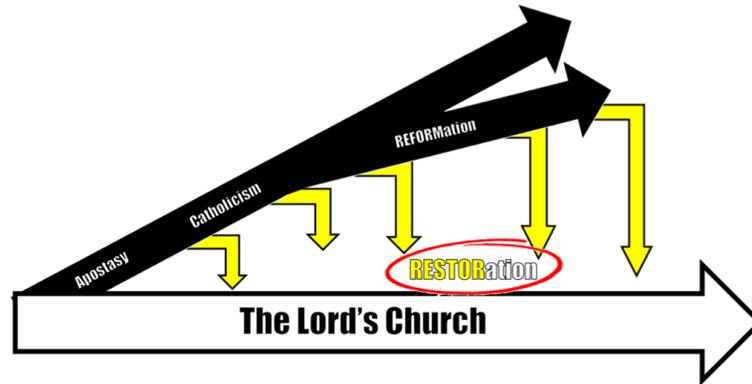
Part 2:
How Should We Restore the Home Church?



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Lesson 5

We should restore the “Restoration Movement.”



The diagram above represents man's struggle since the opening days of the church. From day one, the temptation has always been great for man to settle in to what he believes is best. From temple worship, and divisions over circumcision, to the organization of qualified leaders, it was always the God-inspired apostle's doctrine that pulled the church back from the brink of apostasy.

However, once all the apostles died, the church was left with a choice, would they invent uninspired rules for themselves, or would they anchor themselves to the inspired words of the apostles as given by God? Unfortunately, most chose the first option, and the masses went off into the very dark ages of apostasy.

A few, however, held true. Throughout church history, a faithful remnant has always battled for a return to the supreme authority of Scripture. It is important to note that the restoration movement did not begin in the 1800's. Since the very beginning of the church, faithful Christians have struggled for fidelity and endured great persecution from the establishment. At great personal cost, they stubbornly anchored themselves to the words of God.

In other words, the difference between REFORMATION and RESTORation is the difference between seeking after man and seeking after God.

What about us? What about our topic of home church? Are we being stubbornly loyal to the restoration priorities?

To illustrate the ease with which the church can let the treasured RESTORation priorities slip away, consider a brief overview of the history of the “Reformation Movement” in America

As the church in America came into her own, Christian institutions like grade schools, colleges, and children's homes were established. Even though these institutions were only intended to supplement the efforts of the church, their success lured the church into an institutional mindset.

Many of the same men who served as shepherds of the church, also served as a board of directors for these institutions. The line between church elders and institutional directors became blurred.

This institutional influence led the church to organize institutionally and build institutional structures.

Sunday meals, wedding showers and baby showers gradually moved from our HOMES to the fellowship halls of our institutional church buildings. Neighborhood Bible studies moved from the living room of our HOMES to the classrooms of our institutional church buildings. HOME cooked meals for the poor de-evolved into canned good giveaways from the pantry rooms of our institutional church buildings. Front porch conversations with the preacher moved from his HOME to his office at the institutional church building. In short, the institutionalism which began as a supplement to the church grew into the rationale of the church.

The result of that transition away from a HOME-centered church is obvious. We have appointed elders who have institutional skills, but are not Biblically qualified to lead the flock toward real spiritual maturity. We have expanded our institutionalized assemblies to include “Children’s Church” and an educational system that is modeled after the public school system. We have institutionalized benevolence so much that members are content to throw money at projects, but personal involvement in real servanthood efforts has dwindled. And perhaps worst of all, we have taken such great pride in our ultra-convenient institutional structures that our missionaries are forced to beg for our scraps. There is no denying it, the institutionalization of the American church has made us just like all the other dead denominations around us!

Conclusion: God is not looking for institutional complexities. Establishing a home church requires no special blessing from a church hierarchy or legal document from a civil government. Establishing a home church is as simple as deciding that your home will be devoted to the apostle’s doctrine (New Testament teaching) and centered upon the breaking of bread (Lord’s Supper). See Acts 2:42-47.

It is time to restore to the home-centered priorities of the New Testament church. The early church did not get caught up in institutionalism, they met in borrowed spaces and homes. Their organization was simple and it was fully dependent upon the living example of God’s influence within the home. The early Christians lived their spiritualism, they did not manufacture it. We must restore the “Restoration Movement!”

Questions for Lesson 5:

1. When did the restoration movement begin?
2. What is the difference between REFORMATION and RESTORATION?
3. What are three examples of how institutionalism stole from the purpose of the home.
4. What does God require for the establishment of a home church? (Acts 2:42-47)
5. Can you complete the following sentence? “The early Christians lived their spiritualism, they did not _____ it.”



Lesson 6

We should follow the original example of the churches of Christ in Jerusalem.

Because of the inspired words of Acts 2:46, we know that the Jerusalem church of Christ began as a city-wide collection of home churches. As an expansion of that verse, God also preserved a clear snapshot of the earliest days of the church. This description is an invaluable template for those who would come after the apostolic age.

Read Acts 2:42-47 (ESV) and notice the following phrases.

“they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” - Notice that the grand governing factor of the church was God’s words. The apostles had final say, because the apostles were the ones being directed by the Holy Spirit. Application: We have those same teachings in our New Testament.

“and the fellowship” - Being together was an essential part of their survival. While physical persecution was sporadic, attacks from Satan was daily. This demonic persecution drove them into intimate fellowship to maintain their holiness. Application: We have the same need for spiritual companionship. The home church should be our comfort zone of support.

“to the breaking of bread” – Celebrating the Lord’s Supper was central to the existence of the church. Application: Every part of a home church assembly should be anchored to the remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice.

“and the prayers.” - Speaking to the Father was an essential part of their daily life. Application: The home church experience should be dominated by our lifeline to Heaven.

“And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.” - They took time to marvel at the continuous validations of God. Application: Testimonies about God’s movement within our lives should be common at home church assemblies.

“And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.” - New Testament gatherings were so intimate that needs were known. Dependence was addressed through personal sacrifice. Application: Home church benevolence should come at a personal cost. There is no evidence of generic collections or rainy day savings accounts in the New Testament church.

“And day by day, attending the temple together” - While this phrase does not necessarily indicate that the church met in large groups, it does illustrate their use of borrowed, public spaces. Application: Home churches should gather often with other home churches. When we do, we need to utilize borrowed spaces, both as a way to demonstrate good stewardship of God’s money, and as a way to publicly shine our light to others.

“and breaking bread in their homes” - If we conclude from Acts 20:7 that breaking bread refers to the Lord’s Supper, we could also conclude from Acts 2:46 that communion occurred in homes, not the temple. While the early Christians may have met in large groups on occasion, small, family-size groups were clearly the most regularly used style of assemblies. Application: What size assembly group is most dominant today?

“they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God” - If these phrases are properly kept within the overall context, the food being mentioned could refer to fellowship meals and/or the food distributed because they had all things in common. Either way, the Christians were not too proud to be receivers and givers. Application: The home church can only thrive when her members keep their pride in check.

“and having favor with all the people.” - While the church did experience intermittent periods of persecution, they also found much popularity among the people. Application: Too many dismiss the home church model by suggesting they had to meet in private because of persecution. Those who use such excuses should be reminded that the early church not only met in homes, they also met openly in the borrowed spaces of the temple.

“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” - Early Christians saw spiritual growth as the means to numeric growth. Application: An effective home church does not get distracted by numbers. Our job is to grow in the message of salvation. God’s job is to do the addition.

Conclusion: The descriptions above provide an invaluable template for those of us who come after the apostolic age. If we truly want to be restoration Christians, this glimpse into the workings of the early church must be honored.

Questions for Lesson 6:

1. What was the grand governing factor of the early church?
2. Every part of a home church assembly should be anchored to what?
3. Can you complete the sentence? “There is no evidence of _____ collections or a _____ savings account in the New Testament church.”
4. When multiple home churches met, where does the early record suggest they came together?
5. How do we know that home church assemblies were not simply the result of persecution?



Lesson 7

We should follow the original example of the churches of Christ on Crete.

Paul's instructions about the organization of churches on the island of Crete, provides a very important insight into the apostle's doctrine with regards to the home church.

Titus 1:5 (ESV) This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and *appoint elders in every town* as I directed you—

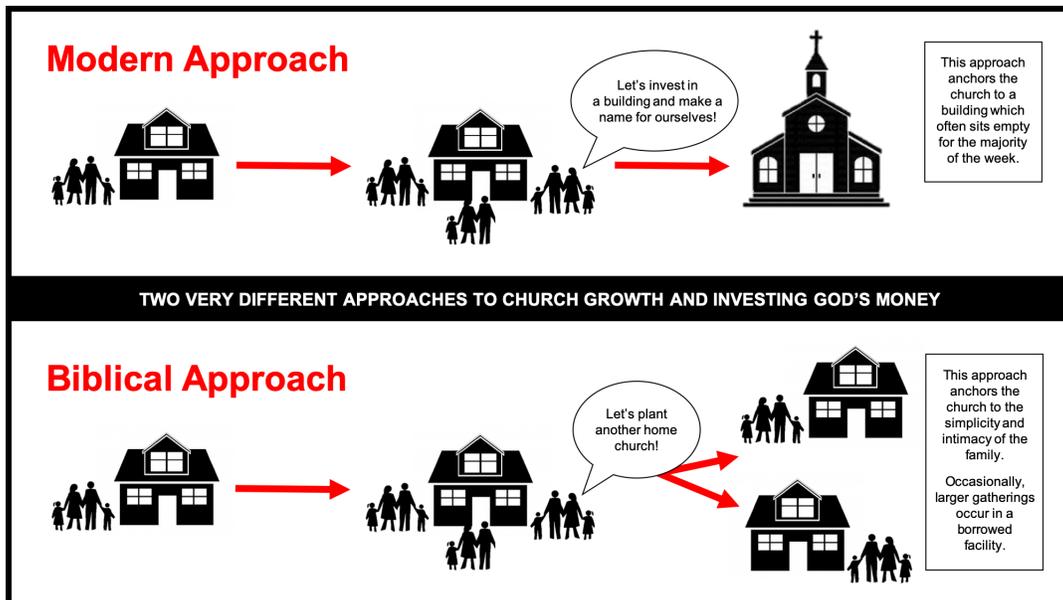
The phrase, "*appoint elders in every town*," confirms two obvious conclusions:

First Obvious Conclusion: It is not necessary to have elders before a home church can be established.

Ironically, one of the most common objections to home church is the initial lack of elders. "How can you operate without an eldership?!" many will ask. The irony of their excuse is this, many of those asking the question did themselves come from well-established congregations who had no elders.

The very fact that Paul was sending Titus to Crete in order to "appoint elders" makes our conclusion obvious. These congregations were already established and operational without elders. Conclusion: It is not necessary to have an eldership before a home church can be established.

Note: To fully meet the qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, it is very possible that a generational development must first come about before a qualified eldership can be appointed. Until that time, the Biblical pattern would suggest that churches should honor men who are proving themselves by their daily advancement in the faith. Additionally, as we will see in the second obvious conclusion, elderships were established over towns. It is very likely that not all home churches had an elder.



Second Obvious Conclusion: Elders are responsible for city groups.

As the church grew, and a single home could no longer accommodate the assembly, the early church DID NOT build a church building, they multiplied into more home churches. Remember the original model laid out by the Jerusalem church of Christ.

In the previous lesson, we noticed that the Jerusalem church of Christ began as a mega-church numbering over 3,000 members. Yet, we also noticed that they met daily in homes. How would it be possible for every assembly to involve every member, or even most of the members, by meeting in a single home? What house, even by today's standards, is capable of hosting a gathering of over 3,000 people?

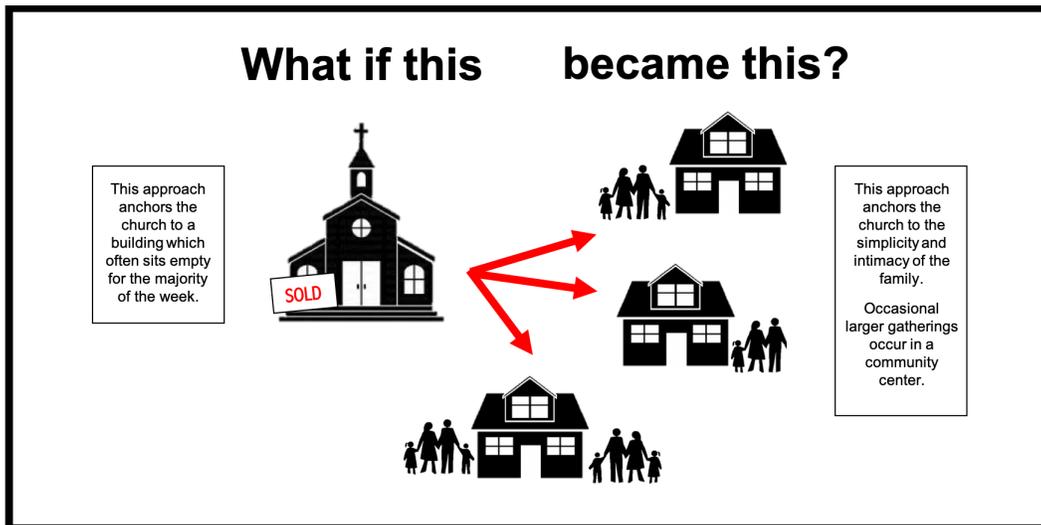
Obvious Conclusion: The apostle's doctrine facilitated a unified city-church by organizing elderships who would shepherd entire towns in which there were multiple home churches.

A city-wide eldership is, no doubt, an extension of the ancient pattern of civil government. Perhaps the most familiar example of this comes from within the story of Boaz and Ruth. Read Ruth 4:1-2, 9-11 (ESV).

This ancient pattern of civil government would have been very familiar to the New Testament Christians. It would have been very natural for them to accept the same functional approach within the organization of the church.

While Scripture does not tell us if every home church had an elder, it does indicate that every city-church had a group of elders. The paternal history of Judaism would suggest that the senior most male within each home would lead that home church. Should that man meet the qualifications laid out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, he would also take responsibility for the city-wide collection of home churches.

Conclusion: We must discard the flawed assumption that constructing a church building is evidence of a mature congregation! The mega-church of the first century did not get caught up in the trend of institutionalized structures. They saw themselves as a city-church with multiple home churches within. Their organization was simple and it was fully dependent upon the living example of God's influence within the home.



Questions for Lesson 7:

1. What was the first obvious conclusion drawn from Titus 1:5?
2. How long might some churches have to wait before appointing an eldership?
3. What was the second obvious conclusion drawn from Titus 1:5?
4. What Old Testament story illustrates the historic foundation for a city-wide eldership?
5. What is one very flawed assumption about the evidence of a mature congregation?



Lesson 8

We should follow the original example of the church of Christ in Corinth.

We know from Acts 18:5-9 that the church of Christ in Corinth was as a home church. As such, the instructions Paul later gives about their assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:17-34) should be specifically applied to home church gatherings.

Paul's inspired moments with the Lord established three essential parts of a home church worship service.

Part 1 - Refocused Submission

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17 (ESV) and notice the following words.

"But in the following instructions I do not commend you" - Notice that Paul begins in the same way we should always open our worship – a call to refocus. Worship must be holy and self-examination is key to that holiness. Application: Beginning each worship with a time of confession can be cleansing.

"because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse." – Paul says that when we attempt to worship without first refocusing on submission, we make things "worse" not "better." Application: Read and apply 1 John 1:8-9.

Part 2 - Inspired Instruction

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23 (ESV) and notice the following words.

"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you..." – Because the apostles left us a written record of what they received from the Lord, those words must be emphasized as our guide to appropriate worship. Please note that Paul's specific focus was on the anchor point of all first century worship – appreciation for the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Application: Everything in the home church worship should point to or become a living application of the Lord's Supper.

Part 3 - Convicted Application

Read 1 Corinthians 11:28 (ESV) and notice the following words.

"Let a person examine himself..." - In many ways, the applications are the most important parts of our assemblies. Every gathering should be a catalyst for change. Application: The context and teachings within the home church gatherings should climax in repentance, resolutions and goal setting.

Conclusion: While other specifics are addressed in 1 Corinthians 11, the above overview of Paul's inspired instructions should provide a helpful guide for a typical home church worship – refocused submission, inspired instruction, and convicted application.

Note: In the next section, we will demonstrate how these three parts can easily be incorporated into a home church worship.

Questions for Lesson 8:

1. How do we know that the church of Christ in Corinth was a home church?
2. What was part 1 of Paul's instructions on a home church worship service? (1 Corinthians 11:17)
3. What is a cleansing way to begin each home church worship service?
4. What was part 2 of Paul's instructions on a home church worship service? (1 Corinthians 11:23)
5. What was part 3 of Paul's instructions on a home church worship service? (1 Corinthians 11:28)



Part 3:
How Should We Worship?

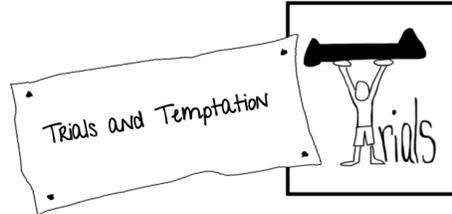


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Lesson 9

We should consider an example worship guide based upon James 1.

The following example begins with a Sunday home church worship guide, then capitalizes on that material by drawing daily discussions and applications to be used in family devotionals.



Sunday - Step 1
Refocused Submission (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:17-22)

Begin by discussing the various areas of Christ's life that He surrendered to do the will of the Father and relate them to the areas of surrender we must develop.

Sunday - Step 2
Inspired Instruction (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Read the chapter. (Suggestion: Involve everyone. Take turns reading.)

Ask each person to memorize the chapter theme by using the picture clue provided. (Suggestion: It is often helpful to have participants draw the picture clue.)

Discuss other possible themes for the chapter. (Suggestion: Develop picture clues to go along with the other chapter themes.)

Sunday - Step 3
Convicted Application (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:27-32)

Ask each person to quote a favorite Bible verse and explain what it means to them.

Explain the significance of the body and blood of Jesus being offered on the cross and have someone lead a prayer thanking God for the sacrifice of His Son.

Pass out the unleavened bread and ask each person to take a moment of silence to examine themselves and meditate on the sacrificed body of Jesus. Do the same for the grape juice.

If there is a current need in the church or community, participants can be encouraged to pool their money to help.

Ask each person to explain how this Bible study impacted their life and tell of a way they plan to live it out in the coming week.

Conclusion

Make a prayer list. Be sure to include time for offering confessions of spiritual weakness.

Make a list of spiritual victories.

Provide copies of the daily devotionals so everyone can continue their study of the chapter throughout the week.

Offer a final prayer.

Memory Passage
of the Week

James 1:2-3 (ESV)
Count it all joy, my brothers,
when you meet trials of various kinds,
3 for you know that the testing of your faith
produces steadfastness.

Monday – Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Note: For very young members of the family, you might give them a single phrase and let them “own” it each time the passage is repeated. Step 2 – Discuss this question – How can trials and hard times make us better? (1:2-4) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Tuesday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question – How is the subject of the next paragraph connected to trials and hard times? (1:5-7) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Wednesday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question - What are the steps that lead to death? Is temptation a sin? (1:14-15) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Thursday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question – Have you ever been like the man in this illustration? How? (1:22-25) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Friday – Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question – Why did the Holy Spirit choose these two groups to illustrate pure religion? (1:27) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

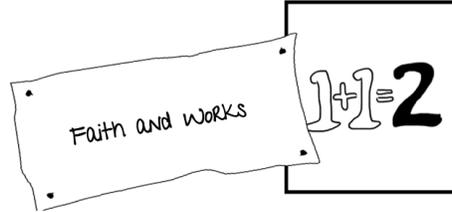
Saturday - Take volunteers to see if anyone can quote the passage from memory. Create a plan to put the applications from this chapter into practice within your family life. Discuss the importance of the Lord’s Day and why it gives honor to God when we get extra rest on Saturday night. Have prayer time.



Lesson 10

We should consider an example worship guide based upon James 2.

The following example begins with a Sunday home church worship guide, then capitalizes on that material by drawing daily discussions and applications to be used in family devotionals.



Sunday - Step 1 Refocused Submission (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:17-22)

Begin with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide each person into a worshipful attitude of surrender.

Sunday - Step 2 Inspired Instruction (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Read the chapter. (Suggestion: Involve everyone. Take turns reading.)

Ask each person to memorize the chapter theme by using the picture clue provided. (Suggestion: It is often helpful to have participants draw the picture clue.)

Discuss other possible themes for the chapter. (Suggestion: Develop picture clues to go along with the other chapter themes.)

Sunday - Step 3 Convicted Application (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:27-32)

Sing a song about Jesus and His love for us. (Suggestion: If you have no one who is accustomed to leading a song, find a song on the internet and have it ready so the group can sing along.)

Explain the significance of the body and blood of Jesus being offered on the cross and have someone lead a prayer thanking God for the sacrifice of His Son.

Pass out the unleavened bread and ask each person to take a moment of silence to examine themselves and meditate on the sacrificed body of Jesus. Do the same for the grape juice.

If there is a current need in the church or community, participants can be encouraged to pool their money to help.

Ask each person to explain how this Bible study impacted their life and tell of a way they plan to live it out in the coming week.

Conclusion

Make a prayer list. Be sure to include time for offering confessions of spiritual weakness.

Make a list of spiritual victories.

Ask each person to be prepared next time to share a way they saw God's power at work in their life or the life of another.

Offer a final prayer.

Memory Passage of the Week

James 2:26 (ESV)

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead,
so also faith apart from works is dead.

Monday – Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Note: For very young members of the family, you might give them a single phrase and let them “own” it each time the passage is repeated. Step 2 – Discuss this question - What is a modern day example of this? (2:1-7) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Tuesday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question – Why is mercy important and how can we show more of it? (2:12-13) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Wednesday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question - What is a modern day illustration of this? (2:15-17) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Thursday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question – Is it possible to demonstrate faith without works? What does that say about their partnership? (2:18) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Friday – Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question – Did Abraham actually offer Isaac on the altar? What does that say about what makes an acceptable offering? (2:21-23) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

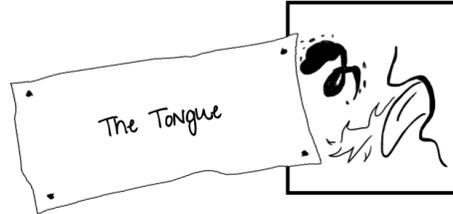
Saturday - Take volunteers to see if anyone can quote the passage from memory. Create a plan to put the applications from this chapter into practice within your family life. Discuss the importance of the Lord's Day and why it gives honor to God when we get extra rest on Saturday night. Have prayer time.



Lesson 11

We should consider an example worship guide based upon James 3.

The following example begins with a Sunday home church worship guide, then capitalizes on that material by drawing daily discussions and applications to be used in family devotionals.



Sunday - Step 1
Refocused Submission (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:17-22)

Ask each person to share a way they saw God's power at work in their life or the life of another.

Sunday - Step 2
Inspired Instruction (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Read the chapter. (Suggestion: Involve everyone. Take turns reading.)

Ask each person to memorize the chapter theme by using the picture clue provided. (Suggestion: It is often helpful to have participants draw the picture clue.)

Discuss other possible themes for the chapter. (Suggestion: Develop picture clues to go along with the other chapter themes.)

Sunday - Step 3
Convicted Application (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:27-32)

Ask each person to quote a favorite Bible verse and explain what it means to them.

Explain the significance of the body and blood of Jesus being offered on the cross and have someone lead a prayer thanking God for the sacrifice of His Son.

Pass out the unleavened bread and ask each person to take a moment of silence to examine themselves and meditate on the sacrificed body of Jesus. Do the same for the grape juice.

If there is a current need in the church or community, participants can be encouraged to pool their money to help.

Ask each person to explain how this Bible study impacted their life and tell of a way they plan to live it out in the coming week.

Conclusion

Make a prayer list. Be sure to include time for offering confessions of spiritual weakness.

Make a list of spiritual victories.

Provide copies of the daily devotionals so everyone can continue their study of the chapter throughout the week. Offer a final prayer.

Memory Passage
of the Week

James 3:10 (ESV)

From the same mouth come blessing and cursing.
My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

Monday – Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Note: For very young members of the family, you might give them a single phrase and let them “own” it each time the passage is repeated. Step 2 – Discuss this question – Why would teachers receive a stricter judgement? (3:1) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Tuesday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question – Besides the illustrations used in this chapter, what other examples can you give of a little thing having great power? (3:1-12) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Wednesday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question - In what ways can the tongue be full of deadly poison? (3:8) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Thursday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question – How does the subject of wisdom fit into the theme of this chapter? (3:13-18) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Friday – Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question – How can each of these qualities of wisdom be better applied within your home? (3:17) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Saturday - Take volunteers to see if anyone can quote the passage from memory. Create a plan to put the applications from this chapter into practice within your family life. Discuss the importance of the Lord’s Day and why it gives honor to God when we get extra rest on Saturday night. Have prayer time.



Lesson 12

We should consider an example worship guide based upon James 4.

The following example begins with a Sunday home church worship guide, then capitalizes on that material by drawing daily discussions and applications to be used in family devotionals.



Sunday - Step 1 **Refocused Submission (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:17-22)**

Begin with a period of sharing. Ask each person to tell of an area of life which needs more surrender.

Sunday - Step 2 **Inspired Instruction (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)**

Read the chapter. (Suggestion: Involve everyone. Take turns reading.)

Ask each person to memorize the chapter theme by using the picture clue provided. (Suggestion: It is often helpful to have participants draw the picture clue.)

Discuss other possible themes for the chapter. (Suggestion: Develop picture clues to go along with the other chapter themes.)

Sunday - Step 3 **Convicted Application (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:27-32)**

Before singing a song about Jesus, read the words and discuss the biblical background of those convictions.

Explain the significance of the body and blood of Jesus being offered on the cross and have someone lead a prayer thanking God for the sacrifice of His Son.

Pass out the unleavened bread and ask each person to take a moment of silence to examine themselves and meditate on the sacrificed body of Jesus. Do the same for the grape juice.

If there is a current need in the church or community, participants can be encouraged to pool their money to help.

Ask each person to explain how this Bible study impacted their life and tell of a way they plan to live it out in the coming week.

Conclusion

Make a prayer list. Be sure to include time for offering confessions of spiritual weakness.

Make a list of spiritual victories.

Ask each person to be prepared to quote or read a favorite Bible verse next time, and explain what it means to them.

Offer a final prayer.

Memory Passage
of the Week

James 4:7 (ESV)

Submit yourselves therefore to God.
Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Monday – Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Note: For very young members of the family, you might give them a single phrase and let them “own” it each time the passage is repeated. Step 2 – Discuss this question – What do verses 2 and 3 tell us about a successful prayer life? (4:2-3) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Tuesday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question - What type of friendship is being condemned? (4:4) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Wednesday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question – Why is it okay for God to be jealous? Is it every right for us to be jealous? (4:5) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Thursday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question - What are the best ways to draw near to God? (4:8) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Friday – Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question – What are some ways that life is like a mist? (4:14) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Saturday - Take volunteers to see if anyone can quote the passage from memory. Create a plan to put the applications from this chapter into practice within your family life. Discuss the importance of the Lord's Day and why it gives honor to God when we get extra rest on Saturday night. Have prayer time.



Lesson 13

We should consider an example worship guide based upon James 5.

The following example begins with a Sunday home church worship guide, then capitalizes on that material by drawing daily discussions and applications to be used in family devotionals.



Sunday - Step 1 **Refocused Submission (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:17-22)**

Begin by discussing the various areas of Christ's life that He surrendered to do the will of the Father and relate them to the areas of surrender we must develop.

Sunday - Step 2 **Inspired Instruction (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)**

Read the chapter. (Suggestion: Involve everyone. Take turns reading.)

Ask each person to memorize the chapter theme by using the picture clue provided. (Suggestion: It is often helpful to have participants draw the picture clue.)

Discuss other possible themes for the chapter. (Suggestion: Develop picture clues to go along with the other chapter themes.)

Sunday - Step 3 **Convicted Application (Patterned after 1 Corinthians 11:27-32)**

Ask each person to quote a favorite Bible verse and explain what it means to them.

Explain the significance of the body and blood of Jesus being offered on the cross and have someone lead a prayer thanking God for the sacrifice of His Son.

Pass out the unleavened bread and ask each person to take a moment of silence to examine themselves and meditate on the sacrificed body of Jesus. Do the same for the grape juice.

If there is a current need in the church or community, participants can be encouraged to pool their money to help.

Ask each person to explain how this Bible study impacted their life and tell of a way they plan to live it out in the coming week.

Conclusion

Make a prayer list. Be sure to include time for offering confessions of spiritual weakness.

Make a list of spiritual victories.

Provide copies of the daily devotionals so everyone can continue their study of the chapter throughout the week.

Offer a final prayer.

Memory Passage
of the Week

James 5:16 (ESV)

Therefore, confess your sins to one another
and pray for one another, that you may be healed.
The prayer of a righteous person has great power
as it is working.

Monday – Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Note: For very young members of the family, you might give them a single phrase and let them “own” it each time the passage is repeated. Step 2 – Discuss this question – In what ways does this sound like our culture? (5:1-6) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Tuesday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question – What other similarities should we have to farmers? (5:7) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Wednesday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question – How might we go about establishing our hearts? (5:8) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Thursday - Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question - What does it mean to swear and why should we not do it in the way being addressed? (5:12) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Friday – Step 1 - Read the memory passage aloud, then repeat it phrase by phrase as the family says it with you. Step 2 – Discuss this question - What might be the association between physical health and sin? (5:14-16) Step 3 - Have prayer time.

Saturday - Take volunteers to see if anyone can quote the passage from memory. Create a plan to put the applications from this chapter into practice within your family life. Discuss the importance of the Lord's Day and why it gives honor to God when we get extra rest on Saturday night. Have prayer time.

