

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org

Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts

May 2015

The Most Important Thing My Parents Did

by: **Tim Challies**



I grew up in a church culture, a catechizing culture, and a family worship culture. Each of these was a tremendous, immeasurable blessing, I am sure. I am convinced that twice-each-Sunday services, and memorizing the catechisms, and worshipping as a family marked me deeply. I doubt I will ever forget that my only comfort in life and death is that I am not my own, but belong in body and soul, both in life and death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, or that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. I can still sing many of the psalms and hymns of my youth, and I have precious memories of my family bowing our heads around the kitchen table.

What was true of my family was true of many of my friends' families. They, too, grew up around churches and catechisms and rigid family devotions. In fact, in all the times I visited their homes, I don't think I ever witnessed a family skip over their devotions. It was the custom, it was the expectation, and it was good. Our church had near 100% attendance on Sunday morning and near 100% attendance on Sunday evening. It was just what we did.

But despite all of the advantages, many of the people I befriended as a child have since left the faith. Some have sprinted away, but many more have simply meandered away, so that an occasionally missed Sunday eventually became a missed month and a missed year. Not all of them, of course. Many are now fine believers, who are serving in their churches and even leading them. But a lot—too many—are gone.

Why? I ask the question from time-to-time. Why are all five of my parents' kids following the Lord,

while so many of our friends and their families are not? Obviously I have no ability to peer into God's sovereignty and come to any firm conclusions. But as I think back, I can think of one great difference between my home and my friends' homes—at least the homes of my friends who have since walked away from the Lord and his church. Though it is not universally true, it is generally true. Here's the difference: I saw my parents living out their faith even when I wasn't supposed to be watching.

I knew they considered God's Word trustworthy, because they began every day with it. I knew that they believed God was really there and really listening, because they got alone with him each morning to pray for themselves and for their kids.

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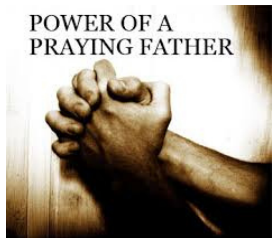
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POWER OF A PRAYING FATHER



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Here is one thing I learned from my parents: Nothing can take the place of simply living as a Christian in view of my children.

No amount of formal theological training, church attendance, or family devotions will make up for a general apathy about the things of the Lord. I can catechize my children all day and every day, but if I have no joy and no delight in the Lord, and if I am not living out my faith, my children will see it and know it.

For all the good things my parents did for me, I believe that the most

important was simply living as Christians before me. I don't think anything shaped or challenged me more than that.

[Used by permission from Ligonier Ministries, March 2015]

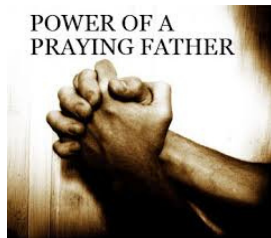
AND THESE WORDS THAT I COMMAND YOU TODAY SHALL BE ON YOUR HEART. YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR CHILDREN, AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE, AND WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY, AND WHEN YOU LIE DOWN, AND WHEN YOU RISE.

DEUTERONOMY 6:6-7

When I tiptoed down the stairs in the morning, I would find my dad in the family room with his Bible open on his lap. Every time I picked up my mom's old NIV Study Bible it was a little more wrecked than the time before, I would find a little more ink on the pages, and a few more pieces of tape trying desperately to hold together the worn binding. When life was tough, I heard my parents reason from the Bible and I saw them pray together. They weren't doing these things for us. They weren't doing them to be seen. They were doing these things because they loved the Lord and loved to spend time with him, and that spoke volumes to me. I had the rock-solid assurance that my parents believed and practiced what they preached. I knew they actually considered God's Word trustworthy, because they began every day with it. I knew that they

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