

FAMILY WORSHIP HELPS

WEEK 31

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

QUESTION 31: *What is effectual calling?*

ANSWER: Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.



MONDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 65A

Scripture: Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14-24; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

Key Thought: *Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit.*

Questions:

- ☞ What does the word "effectual" mean?
- ☞ How does the Holy Spirit "call" people to believe in Christ?
- ☞ When a minister calls upon men to repent and believe the gospel, does everyone understand and respond with faith?
- ☞ What is it that enables some to respond to the gospel with faith?
- ☞ Who receives the glory for every response of faith?

Prayer

Notes: This week we will be considering the doctrine of effectual calling as defined by the *Shorter Catechism*. This doctrine concerns the actual moment at which the heart of a sinner is awakened and called forth from death to life. We begin with the fact that effectual calling is a work of God's Spirit. You may need to help your younger children understand the meaning of the word "effectual." Explain the difference between an outward and inward call. An outward call goes forth every time that a minister proclaims the gospel and exhorts (i.e. calls) his hearers to repent and turn to Christ for salvation. Yet not everyone responds with faith to the outward call. The inward call takes place when the Holy Spirit applies the gospel message with power to the heart of the hearer and causes him to respond by actually repenting and believing in Christ. It is essential to understand that this inward call is the work of God's Spirit, rather than the work of man's own heart, in order to avoid the common error that makes the moment of conversion dependent upon man's exercise of free will. The *Catechism* rightly recognizes that what makes the outward call effectual in those who believe is not their own power, but the power of the Holy Spirit within them. Sinners are dead in sin until the Spirit of God gives them life.



TUESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 65A

Scripture: Read Acts 2:29-37

Key Thought: *The Spirit convinces us of our sin and misery.*

Questions:

- ☞ Which is a bigger problem in man: excessive pride, or poor self-esteem? Explain your answer.
- ☞ According to the *Catechism* answer, what is the first step in effectual calling? Why is this necessary?
- ☞ What means does the Spirit use to convince us of our sin and misery?
- ☞ Have you been convinced of your own sin and misery?

Prayer

Notes: The first step in the Spirit's work of effectual calling is to convince us of our sin and misery. Show your children that man's biggest problem is excessive pride, rather than poor self-esteem, as the world would lead us to believe. Sinful man thinks too much of himself, and therefore feels confident that he does not need God. In order for a sinner's heart to be called to Christ, he must see himself as one in desperate need of saving. His pride must be broken and his eyes opened to see that he is a wretched, corrupt, wicked, lost sinner. Unless the sinner sees himself as he truly is before God, he will never turn to Christ for salvation. Instead, he will continue on deceiving himself and believing that he is fine. The means that the Spirit ordinarily uses to convince us of our sin and misery is the preaching of the Word of God. The preaching of the law shows men that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" and that "the wages of sin is death." In order for men to be saved, they must first be shown that they are lost through the preaching and application of the Word. Challenge your children to examine their own hearts and to inquire whether they have truly been convinced of their own sin and misery. Pray together, thanking God for the conviction of the Spirit, which leads to life in Christ.



WEDNESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 65A

Bible Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:1-7; Acts 26:18

Key Thought: *The Spirit enlightens our minds in the knowledge of Christ.*

Questions:

- ☞ What is the second step in effectual calling?
- ☞ If we were only made to see our sin and misery, would we have hope or despair?
- ☞ How does the Holy Spirit give us hope?

- ☞ What “knowledge of Christ” must we have in order to be saved?
- ☞ Can this knowledge be gained by human reason? Why or why not?
- ☞ Has the Spirit enlightened your mind in the knowledge of Christ?

Prayer

Notes: The next step in effectual calling, after conviction of sin, is the enlightenment of the mind in the knowledge of Christ. Just as the preaching of the law shows men that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” and that “the wages of sin is death,” the preaching of the gospel shows them that “the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” It is not enough to merely show men their sin and misery. If the work of the Spirit ended there, all would be left in overwhelming gloom and despair. But when the Spirit calls the heart of a sinner, He also unveils the truth of the redeeming work of Christ on behalf of His people. He enables us to understand who Jesus Christ is and what God has accomplished for us in Him. Talk with your children about some of the essential elements of the knowledge of Christ. Explain to them that although anyone can comprehend certain facts about Jesus Christ, true knowledge of Him cannot be gained by human reason. The mind of man is lost in darkness and is incapable of understanding spiritual truth apart from the inward work of the Spirit of God. A demon can acknowledge who Christ is, but only a man born of the Spirit can truly know Him. Show your children that the knowledge spoken of here is an intimate knowledge of love for Christ and a fervent desire for fellowship with Him. Challenge them to examine their own hearts for this work of the Spirit to see whether their minds have been enlightened in the knowledge of Christ.



THURSDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 65A

Scripture: Read Psalm 110:1-3; Ezekiel 26:36-37; Philippians 2:12-13

Key Thought: *The Spirit renews our wills.*

Questions:

- ☞ What is your “will”? What is wrong with it?
- ☞ How does the Holy Spirit renew our wills?
- ☞ Can a man “choose Christ” before the Holy Spirit renews his will? Why or why not?
- ☞ Is it possible to want to be saved, yet be lost? Explain.
- ☞ Has the Spirit renewed your will?

Prayer

Notes: The first two steps in effectual calling deal with the awakening of the heart and mind to personal sin and to the promise of redemption in Christ. The third step, which is the renewing of the will, deals with the stirring of the

heart to respond to the call of the gospel. Just as it is true that the heart and mind cannot understand the hope of the gospel apart from the inward work of the Spirit, so it is that the will of the sinner cannot embrace Christ of its own power. Explain to your children that no sinner has a desire in his heart to approach God or seek the face of Christ. Man is dead in sin. A physically dead man does not have a will to live. He cannot choose life for himself. He is completely powerless. Likewise, one who is spiritually dead cannot exercise his will to choose Christ and live. The glory of the power of God in the gospel is seen in the fact that life and hope in Christ are preached to dead men, and the Spirit of God brings them to life! It is not the “free will” of men that enables them to choose Christ, but the working of the Spirit who sets their captive will free and enables them to come to Him. Challenge your children to examine their hearts to see if their will has been renewed to desire the glory of Christ.



FRIDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 65A

Scripture: Read John 6:44-71; 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Key Thought: *The Spirit persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.*

Questions:

- ☞ What is the fourth step in effectual calling?
- ☞ Why does a child of God respond to the gospel by embracing Christ? What does it mean to “embrace Christ”?
- ☞ Are all men responsible for how they respond to the outward call of the gospel? Who gets the credit if they believe?

Prayer

Notes: The final step in effectual calling is the embracing of Christ as He is freely offered in the gospel, which results from the Spirit’s persuasion and enabling power. Discuss with your children what it means to “embrace Christ.” Show them that in effectual calling, the Spirit of God first opens man’s heart to see his sin, then opens his mind to understand the hope of redemption through Christ, then inclines his will to desire and long for Christ, then persuades and empowers him to embrace Christ. It is the work of the Spirit from beginning to end, and not the work of the sinner’s autonomous will. To God alone be glory for the salvation of His elect!



Note: Only five lessons per week are included. You are encouraged to lead your family in worship seven days a week. On weekends, you may want to review or build upon the lessons from the previous week, discuss the sermon from Sunday morning, or work on questions from the Catechism or memory verses. These lesson suggestions are intended to provide a simple framework for parents to build upon. You are not limited to this content. The habit of morning and evening family worship is the biblical ideal. We hope you can use these lessons as a starting point for the development of a blessed practice of family worship in your home.