

FAMILY WORSHIP HELPS

WEEK 48

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

QUESTION 50: *What is required in the second commandment?*

ANSWER: The second commandment requireth the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word.

MONDAY

Praise: Sing Psalm 84A

Scripture: Read Matthew 15:1-9

Key Thought: *God appoints ordinances of worship in His word.*

Questions:

- ☞ What is meant by “religious worship” in the *Catechism* answer?
- ☞ What is an “ordinance”?
- ☞ What are these religious ordinances, which God has appointed in His word?
- ☞ Do men have the freedom to create their own ordinances and introduce them into the religious worship of God?

Prayer

Notes: It is the pattern of the Westminster divines to examine each commandment, first in terms of its positive injunctions and then in terms of its stated and implicit prohibitions. This week, we will examine the duties required by the 2nd commandment. These all center around the preservation and practice of all ordinances of religious worship that God has appointed in His word. It is a sad fact of our modern era that the question of whether or not God has given explicit direction in the Bible for how He is to be approached in worship by His redeemed creatures is rarely, if ever, considered in the Church. So entrenched is self-centered emotionalism and narcissistic individualism, even within the Christian culture, that it is simply taken for granted that worship should be designed according to man's ideas, talents, feelings, and inventions. The delegates to the Westminster Assembly had a much different—and vastly more biblical—view of worship, which began not with the fickle fancies of fallen men, but with the unchanging ordinances of Almighty God. Their discussion of the form of worship therefore begins with the presumption that God has given to His Church specific ordinances, or commandments, for how He is to be honored. Among these ordinances, the *Larger Catechism* lists, “prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ; the reading, preaching, and hearing of the

word; the administration and receiving of the sacraments; church government and discipline; the ministry and maintenance thereof; religious fasting; swearing by the name of God, and vowing unto him”—all given with Scripture proofs. When men presume to bring their own invented ordinances to worship, without biblical command, they are guilty of “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” which Jesus calls “vain worship.”



TUESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 84A

Scripture: Read Psalm 84:1-12; 119:97-104

Key Thought: *The 2nd commandment requires us to receive God's appointed ordinances of worship.*

Questions:

- ☞ By placing boundaries around the way that He is worshiped, does God intend to deny His people joy?
- ☞ What are these boundaries intended to promote?
- ☞ What are they intended to prevent?
- ☞ How should we receive God's appointed ordinances?
- ☞ Does your heart delight in God's appointed worship?

Prayer

Notes: Since the serpent's cunning deception of our first parents, it has been the tendency of fallen mankind to view God's commandments as a denial of something good or desirable. It is no surprise then, that people tend to see the idea of specific ordinances for worship as a denial of joy, creativity, and personal expression. Nothing could be further from the truth for a child of God. The sentiments expressed in Psalm 84 reveal a deep sense of joy and delight in worshiping God according to His commands. In fact, God purposefully designed the ordinances of worship to keep our thoughts fixed upon Him, which is where a redeemed heart finds its greatest joy. Conversely, they are designed to prevent us from drifting off into self-worship by making our own ideas and accomplishments the focus or means of our praise. The 2nd commandment, then, which requires us to receive God's appointed ordinances of religious worship, shows us that it is the duty of the child of God to rejoice in the divinely appointed elements of worship instead of seeing them as barring the way to our self-expression.



WEDNESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 84A

Scripture: Read Deuteronomy 4:1-19

Key Thought: *The 2nd commandment requires us to observe God's appointed ordinances of worship.*

Questions:

- ☞ What is the difference between receiving God's ordinances and observing them?
- ☞ Is God pleased by the mere outward observance of the ordinances of worship that He has appointed? How are we to observe God's appointed ordinances?
- ☞ Do we observe God's appointed ordinances because God needs to be worshiped? Why are we to observe God's appointed ordinances?

Prayer

Notes: In pointing out the requirement of the 2nd commandment that we receive the ordinances of God, the *Catechism* directs us to the attitude we ought to have toward His appointed form of worship. We are now put in mind of the fact that the very purpose of God's ordinances, whether of worship or any other aspect of life, is "that you might observe them." It may seem like belaboring the obvious, and yet the testimony of human history amply demonstrates that many seem to receive God's commands who never seem to get around to observing them. Of course, it must be emphasized that God is never pleased with a mere outward observance of His ordinances. Worship that pleases God is that which is offered in spirit and in truth—that is, with spirit-wrought zeal and faithfulness to His revealed word. Neither do we observe God's appointed worship in order to satisfy some need on the part of God to be honored by His creatures. We observe His commandments because He is God. His authority compels us; His perfection inspires us; His grace moves us; His power enables us; and His word directs us.



THURSDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 84A

Scripture: Read Exodus 20:18-26

Key Thought: *The 2nd commandment requires us to keep God's appointed ordinances of worship pure.*

Questions:

- ☞ What does it mean for something to be pure?
- ☞ What is the purpose of an altar?
- ☞ What does it mean to profane something?
- ☞ Why would using a tool to make an altar of stone profane it?
- ☞ How can we keep God's worship pure?

Prayer

Notes: The main principle behind the 2nd commandment is the purity of God's praise. In order to emphasize this point, God commanded the people through

Moses that they were not even to use a carving tool upon an altar of stone before using it for their burnt offerings, because they would profane it by adding their own design to God's worship. God knew very well how their idolatrous hearts would be tempted to admire and honor the work of their own artistry rather than the God who had redeemed them from bondage. In light of this, James Fisher in *Catechism on the Shorter Catechism* observes that to keep the ordinances of God pure "is to contribute our utmost endeavor to preserve them from all mixture of human invention."



FRIDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 84A

Scripture: Read Luke 1:1-6

Key Thought: *The 2nd commandment requires us to keep God's appointed ordinances of worship entire.*

Questions:

- ☞ Is any one part of worship more important than another?
- ☞ Is a sin of omission (not doing something commanded) less offensive than a sin of commission (doing something forbidden)?
- ☞ Should you pay more attention to the sermon than to the congregational prayer?

Prayer

Notes: Our final lesson this week addresses the issue of consistency in worship, which requires that due attention be given to every ordinance required by God, not excluding some or slighting any for the sake of others. To keep God's ordinances entire, says Fisher, "is in the exercise of faith, to attend upon each of them in its proper season, so as that one duty may not jostle out another." Every command of God is perfect and every ordinance He has given to His children holds some special benefit for their souls. We are reminded then, rather than being distracted and drawn away by our own innovations in worship, to cherish every element of worship appointed by God in His Word. By giving each commanded element its due emphasis and observing each in its appointed time and place, we will not only benefit more roundly from God's grace but we will give greater glory to Him whose wisdom has ordered the praise of His saints.



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.