

**TEXT** Deuteronomy 6:1-15; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15

**SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE** Deuteronomy 11:18-21

**OBJECTIVE** The students will be able to explain that it is the responsibility of the parents to teach their children the truths of God’s Word. And as the family participates in studying and praying together, they will have the blessing of God.

**KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER** Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. ó Psalm 34:11

**KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH** Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. ó Proverbs 22:6

**ANSWER**  
**TITLE:** **A Change in Andy**  
**SEARCH**  
**TITLE:** **Family Altar**

**REFERENCE INFORMATION**

The Law of Moses was very definite in its requirement that parents must train their children in the knowledge of God and His commandments. Concerning these divine precepts it said, “Teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons” (Deuteronomy 4:9). Concerning the carrying out of this commandment, one writer has said, “Religious education in the family became, as it has continued, a special mark of Judaism.” It became the very solemn duty of Hebrew parents to teach their children the commandments of the Law, and also to explain to them the real meaning of the religious observances. No doubt it has been this emphasis upon religious educa-

tion in the family which has contributed so largely to the permanence of the Jews in history. And it is also true that any failure of the Jews to fulfill their God-given mission in the world may be traced in part, to their failure in family religious training.

For the perpetuation of God’s ideas among the people, they were not to depend on public instruction alone, but were to teach the Law diligently at home and in every aspect of their lives. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Training doesn’t just happen.

**YOUR OPENER**

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# Family Altar

**TEXT:** Deuteronomy 6:1-15; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15

**SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE:** Deuteronomy 11:18-21

**KEY VERSE:** Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. — Proverbs 22:6

## RESPONSES

1. Genesis 18:19 . . . and they shall keep the way of the LORD. — Abraham

Joshua 24:15 . . . we will serve the LORD. — Joshua

Ask your students to name some of the benefits Abraham and Joshua received because they were examples of righteousness. They were obviously men who influenced others to godliness.

2. “Continually,” because he was concerned about the spiritual condition of his children. Ask your students if they feel this was a pattern Job established only after his children had grown and left home. Direct their attention to verse one, which brings out that Job was “perfect—upright.” No doubt he had prayed for his children from their birth. Ask your students if they feel there is any point at which the parental responsibility ends, at which they can or may as well stop praying.

3. Discussion of the parallel should bring up several points. The exchange of the baton is crucial between runners. Just so is the giving of the Word from parent to child. What is the result if the baton is dropped? What is the result, almost surely, if the parents fail in their responsibility? Who wants to lose a race? Who wants to see the loss of a soul?

A family altar or a systematic approach to devotions and religious instruction is a practice ordained by God. It is the responsibility and privilege of parents to present the knowledge of God to their children. This can be done through the study of the Word of God, prayer, and through the example lived by the parents. Instruction in God’s Word was not optional. God commanded the Children of Israel to diligently teach their children.

1. Some of the earliest examples of family altars are found in the Old Testament. Using the following Scriptures as references, finish the verses and name the person each verse is referring to.

Genesis 18:19 — For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him,

Joshua 24:15 — But as for me and my house,

2. The family altar includes praying for the children as well as instructing them in God’s Word. How often and for what reason did Job do this? See Job 1:5.

3. God commanded the Children of Israel to teach the Law to their children so it would be well with them, “lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee.” Compare running a relay race to passing on the Word of God to our children.

## ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

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4. If a man is faithful to teach his children the truth of God's Word, what is the reward or promise (Proverbs 22:6)? In view of this Scripture, how is it that some people who received godly training in their youth are not Christians today?

5. The family altar is not just a few moments of meditation, but the spirit of family worship should prevail continually. There are many things which can choke out the Word and make it unfruitful. It is important that the concerns of the parents do not negate the time of family worship. What can be done to keep the spirit of worship in the home?

6. How old should a child be before the parents start teaching him the Word of God? (See Isaiah 28:9 and 2 Timothy 3:15.) What are some of the ways in which teaching can be started at an early age?

7. Should the responsibility of teaching the Word of God to children be that of the Sunday school teacher and the preacher alone? Qualify your answer.

8. Reading lengthy portions of Scripture and having prayer might be a very limited form of family worship. List some interesting ideas for variety during this valuable time together.

**THOUGHT PROVOKER:** The average child watches 18,000 hours of television by the time he graduates from high school. This is about 2 hours and 45 minutes each day. Do you think God should have equal time?

4. The promise is, "When he is old, he will not depart from it." Guide your students to the realization that godly training, though not a guarantee of salvation, will not be erased or forgotten. Its effect and influence will remain, even though some may resist committing their lives to the Lord.

5. Your students' suggestions may include consistency in worship, putting Christ first in the decisions made, setting a godly example in all behavior, talking about the things of God.

6. As soon as the child is weaned the teaching should begin. Suggestions regarding teaching at this very early age may include singing Sunday school songs to infants, showing them pictures of Jesus, and helping them identify the Bible. The point of this should be that we cannot wait until a child can think for himself. The devil does not wait that long before he plies his wares.

7. No. However, some families do not have any family altar. Because of this, Sunday school teachers and ministers do have a responsibility to do their best in teaching God's Word. But the main responsibility is that of the parents because the sooner the Word of God is planted in the heart, the greater the defense will be against the wiles of the devil.

8. Allow time for your students to offer their suggestions. Their thoughts may include varying the manner of presentation, gearing the story to the age level and understanding of the children, using objects or pictures to illustrate points, striving to make the family-altar time one of warmth, pleasant companionship, and sharing.

## YOUR WRAP-UP

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## SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

Why do you think a family altar is important?

How many times a day do you think you should pray?

Why should you pray?

When should you have family altar?

How would you handle the observance of family worship when you have a visitor?

Do you feel the family altar benefits the family? Give a reason for your answer.

How should the family worship God in their home? What are some things that are done during this time of fellowship?

What are some ideas to make the family altar interesting on preschool, primary, junior, teenage, and adult levels? What commandments of God were the Children of Israel to teach to their children?

What do you think would happen to a family that does not believe in or has neglected God? Can you give some illustrations?

There is a saying that the family that prays together stays together. What does this mean?

In our ANSWER story, Andy resisted and resented family worship. Do you think this really happens sometimes? What might be some reasons for an attitude like this?

## THINGS TO DO

Demonstrate what the family altar is. Show what is done during the time of family devotions. If there are students who have Christian families, have them share with the class what is done in their family devotions.

Bring a family heirloom and explain what it is. Relate this to the Gospel. Like the heirloom, the Word is handed down from generation to generation. Emphasize how valuable God's Word is to us and that we must pass it on to our children.

Make a family of clothespin dolls. Use felt markers to draw their features. The family should have especially happy faces. Glue small magnets on the backs of each one. Show this family reading and praying together, and then use a large magnet to draw the family members together. Use this to illustrate how family worship can bring us closer to each other, and also allow us to be moved by God. The blessings of God are with the Christian family.

Have a panel discussion on how parents influence their children to do right or wrong. Talk about how we imitate our parents' good habits and sometimes their bad habits. Discuss how important it is that the student can "turn the table" and become a good example to parents who need God. Explain why prayer and reading the Bible is important.

## Answers for ANSWER

### What Is Needed?

When families pray together they are blessed by God. Read Deuteronomy 6:1-15 and fill in the blanks in the sentences below. Then copy the words in the proper spaces on the puzzle. The words in the shaded area of the puzzle will tell you what is needed in a Christian home.

That thou mightest (1) fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his (2) statutes and his (3) Commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son... (verse 2)

Hear, therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may (4) increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with (5) milk and (6) honey. (verse 3)

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine (7) heart, and with all thy (8) soul, and with all thy (9) might. (verse 5)

And thou shalt (10) teach them diligently unto thy (11) children. (verse 7)

Thank You, Jesus, for this special time of prayer.

1. fear  
2. statutes  
3. commandments  
4. increase  
5. milk  
6. honey  
7. heart  
8. soul  
9. might  
10. teach  
11. children