

## PRESERVING A CHRISTIAN HOME by Dort Preus

So many of us grow up taking for granted that living in a Christian home is the way it is supposed to be. If this is the case for you thank our gracious God for that! No matter how strong or weak our Christian home life was it has given us some wisdom in being Christian wives and mothers. A Christian should always be humble because he or she doesn't know the first thing about being a Christian except by the guidance of God's Word. The same goes especially as a wife and mother. What is especially wonderful about being Lutheran is that we know with God's Word we can live under God's Grace and boldly live in this world that hates its gracious God and His children. The flesh, the devil, and the world rage against the Christian's best intentions and are pretty scary and can be very discouraging. But as the mountain climber looks for the footing instead of looking down or the pool player or bowler looks to a focus point to accomplish his goal, the Christian must do the same. Christians are sinners who look to Christ and know the gracious, almighty God looks at us as saints through this same Christ His precious Son and our brother and Savior.

I have naught, my God, to offer,

Save the blood of Thy dear Son;

Graciously accept the proffer;

Make His righteousness mine own.

His holy life gave He, was crucified for me;

His righteousness perfect He now pleads before Thee:

His own robe of righteousness, my highest good,

Shall clothe me in glory, through faith in His blood. ELH 182 verse 6

Since I was a little girl hearing Bible Stories in Sunday school, I have always loved theology. I always thought that was normal for Christians. I remember

looking forward to going to Sunday school to hear these true stories from long ago when God showed His love for His children. I remember hearing of poor Hannah who was so sad because she did not have any children. It touched me so that she wanted to have children to honor her husband. I remember praying earnestly that if I ever got married I hoped God would give me lots of children to honor my husband. God answers prayers!

Many Christian women really don't think through what they want for a husband. I wanted to marry a Lutheran. I thank God that I married a Lutheran that cared about being Lutheran and knew what a Lutheran is. I don't know if I was so clear on that myself in the dating years of my life. It wasn't until I went to Concordia Junior College in Ann Arbor , Michigan that I knew that there was such a thing as a synod. I thought a Lutheran was a Lutheran. You know, we all believed what Luther's Small Catechism taught. It clicked what my pastor taught about going to a church where the marks of the church are given rightly.

There many shall come from the east and the west

And sit at the feast of salvation With Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the blest,

Obeying the Lord's invitation. Have mercy upon us, O Jesus!

But they who have always resisted His grace And on their own virtue depended,

Shall then be condemned and cast out from His face, Eternally lost and unfriended,

Have mercy upon us, O Jesus! ELH 200 verses 1 and 2

My husband Rolf and I met at Concordia the Fall of 1972. Rolf liked to talk theology and that was great! At that time the Missouri Synod was struggling with liberals at the St. Louis Seminary. I was horrified that seminary professors actually denied that the Bible was God's Word and that we can depend on and trust God's Word as the absolute truth. How could unbelievers prepare young men to be future pastors in Lutheran Churches!?! Rolf's father was one of the few professors on campus that was willing to defend and teach the Bible was the inerrant Word of God. I thought of how God still provides Davids, Daniels,

Shadracks, Meshaks and Abenegos. I thanked God and prayed to keep Rolf's father and others like him faithful and courageous. After all, I may not have known that there were so many 'kinds' of Lutherans, but I did know that God's Word needed to be preached and taught faithfully.

A mighty Fortress is our God, A trusty Shield and Weapon;

He helps us free from ev'ry need That hath us now o'ertaken.

The old evil foe Now means deadly woe; Deep guile and great might

Are his dread arms in fight; On earth is not his equal. ELH 250 verse 1

The time came when I went home with Rolf to St. Louis , Missouri to meet his family. What a wonderful family! What most impressed me were family devotions. At the time there were 8 of the 10 children home. At the end of evening meals, Rolf's father would tell a Bible story then asked each of us questions about the story from the youngest to the oldest. Then the family sang a hymn. It was home, church, the communion of saints. What a wonderful way to impress the teaching of God's Word. I always struggled singing hymns, but these children had learned and sang with confidence. It was a way of life.

On my heart imprint Thine image, Blessed Jesus, King of grace,

That life's riches, cares, and pleasures, Have no pow'r Thee to efface.

This the superscription be: Jesus, crucified for me,

Is my life, my hope's foundation, And my glory and salvation. ELH 593

Rolf and I were married in May of 1975. Our first child, Daniel, was born in September of 1976 while Rolf was attending Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, Indiana . I remember very well that towards the end of my labor before delivering Daniel, I thought I am not going to go through this again! When Daniel was delivered I had this silly thought, "My goodness! There really

was a baby in there!" I guess seeing is believing. When I was finally alone holding Daniel, I marveled at God's creation that happened in my body! God is entrusting this precious little one to our care! Right away I am thinking of death and heaven. This child was only minutes from birth! How silly? No, it is Christian. Even as I marvel at this beautiful child with the perfect fingers and perfect toes, this child was born in sin and the wages of sin is death. This child needs to have his sins washed away. And this child needs to be nurtured to battle his flesh, the devil and the world so he can have the crown of eternal life. I was humbled remembering how Hannah rejoiced at the birth of her son Samuel and gave him back to God. We had Daniel adopted by God through Baptism according to His promise. We prayed with thanksgiving, for wisdom, courage and confidence to raise this child in a God-pleasing way so Daniel would know his loving God. We pray always that Daniel, and now his younger siblings as well, will trust God faithfully according to His Word as steadfastly as Daniel in the lions' den. In order for Daniel to grow up doing this, we would have to faithfully nourish him in God's Word.

Praise to Thee and adoration,  
Blessed Jesus, Son of God  
Who, to serve Thine own creation,  
Didst partake of flesh and blood.  
Teach me that I never may  
From Thy fold or pastures stray,  
But with zeal and joy exceeding  
Follow where Thy steps are leading  
  
Let me never, Lord, forsake Thee,  
E'en though bitter pain and strife  
On my way shall overtake me;

But may I through all my life  
Walk in fervent love to Thee,  
In all woes for comfort flee  
To Thy birth, Thy death and passion;  
Till I see Thy full salvation. ELH 596

I tell you a little of my life story here not just because I am a woman. Women love to tell about their lives. All you need to do is channel surf on to talk shows and to women 'preachers' to gag on that fact! Perhaps I am so relational that it is hard not to talk about things in life without relating to how God's Word related to the simple girl I was and to the simple woman I am. I am convinced that God is in control. I take great comfort in that. Because no matter how I try to be in control of my life, nothing and I mean nothing goes the way I think it should. So I try to remember that and muddle through, focus on Christ on the cross and God will take care of the details. What has been the biggest influence on my life are Bible Stories. These have given me strength, courage, and faith. My husband, my children and my church are my life. They have also given me strength, courage, and faith. And we talk theology.

Let us ever walk with Jesus, Follow His example pure,

Flee the world, which would deceive us, And to sin our souls allure.

Ever in His footsteps treading, Body here, yet soul above, Full of faith and hope and love,

Let us do the Father's bidding. Faithful Lord, abide with me; Savior, lead, I follow Thee. ELH 236 v.1

I am asked to give advice in how to preserve a Christian Family. Well here goes.

1. Always look to your husband as the head of the house, repent and pray for him.

This is not easy. Husbands do not deserve it. Husbands are not capable. Husbands are not sensitive. Husbands are poor miserable sinners. But don't you think God knew all that when He had it recorded in scripture about wives submitting to their husbands? (Ephesians 5; I Peter 3) God said it so that settles it. Besides, wives are poor miserable sinners too. The husband has to love his wife as Christ loves the Church. The wife is probably not worth it except Jesus thought so. If the wife expects her husband to look at her as Christ looks at her, then she must look at her husband, with his shortcomings and all, as Christ looks at him. Love your husband as yourself. And talk theology.

So I fell in love with Rolf. He has a few flaws, but I thought I could live with them. We are going to live happily ever after. We talk theology. After we are married I adjust to these flaws and learn to live with them. Rolf points out he can live with these flaws of MINE as well. Sometimes we struggle to live with all these flaws. We adjust, talk theology and we adjust, talk theology and we adjust, talk theology and we live happily ever after.

It is the wife's duty to look to her husband as the head of the family. She can always find a good reason to take over the headship of the household, but I don't think she is truly happy. God knows that the husband needs the respect of his wife and children. Remember God instituted marriage. It is God that uses marriage to explain the relationship between Christ and the church. When the wife submits to God's Word, her husband and her children will willingly respect and honor her all the more. In the same way, when the church submits to Christ she is blessed. God is good and gracious. Be humble and pray God will give your husband strength and wisdom through God's Word. And talk theology.

I pray Thee, dear Lord Jesus, My heart to keep and train

That I Thy holy temple From youth to age remain.

Turn Thou my thoughts forever From worldly wisdom's lore;

If I but learn to know Thee, I shall not want for more. ELH 178

2. Be there for your children, repent and pray for them.

Make it a rule for yourself to be home when the children are home. Mothers have always helped to provide for the family. But instead of being the exception to the rule, the exception has become the rule that mothers will have someone else care for her children while she helps provide for the family. It is a very sad thing to watch and hear about. We are the richest country in the world, yet the cry is that families cannot get by without the mother working outside the home. Amazing. Churches provide daycares with the excuse that it is a good mission outreach. These churches mean well, but they are seriously hurting the primary mission fields that God has given. That is the Christian family. I know of two different accounts of two Lutheran churches that provide daycare where the mothers are at home while their children are in daycare. The excuse for an infant child was that the parents didn't want their child to miss out on the benefits of daycare and be different from future classmates. When is the family talking theology?

God provides the mission by giving children. God does not give children to be put into a man-made institution. God instituted marriage to raise children. Children are a blessing from God as Eve, Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth, Mary, Eunice, Lois and many more of our foremothers very well knew. Moms need to be with their children. A mother would always try to manage to be with her children and help with the expenses in providing for the family. It has only been in recent years that mothers, wanting to have extra income, would have institutions care for their children. A member from our congregation, who is a mother and grandmother, says daycare centers are nothing more than orphanages. She is absolutely right! It was a sad thing that children lived in orphanages because their mothers had died, neglected, or deserted them. Now it is accepted to neglect our children on a regular basis for what? To pay for the extra car to drive to work so she can help with the family income? To pay for the insurance for the car to drive to work so she can help with the family income? To pay for the clothes to go to work so she can help with the family income? To pay for convenient foods because there isn't enough time to fix a meal because of her job she has to help with the family income? To go to a fast food restaurant or send out for pizza because the job, which is to help with the family income, has been especially tiring that day to even prepare the convenient foods? To help pay for the quality time and/or special activities with or for her children because she hasn't had enough time with her children because of her job to help with the family income? To pay for a big house so she and all the family can have their own space when everyone is home together? To help pay somebody to care and listen to her children talk? After adding all the costs of having a job, is it worth it? Who is taking care of the

children? Thank God Mary didn't have that attitude!!! Mary was in awe, but she trusted God would provide. Indeed He provided for her, Joseph, Jesus and the whole world far beyond our understanding. Mary is the greatest example for all mothers.

My soul magnifies the Lord: and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For He has regarded: the low estate of His handmaiden; For, behold, from henceforth: all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty has done to me great things: and holy is His name. And His mercy is on those that fear Him: from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm: He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats: and exalted those of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things: and the rich He has sent empty away. He has helped His servant Israel in remembrance of His mercy: as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever. ELH p.123

Please forgive me for sounding so harsh. We live in a culture that accepts wrong as being acceptable. When the whole family comes down with the flu, we may accept the symptoms and deal with it but we don't accept it as a way of life. For example, we know divorce is wrong. It is a sin. Christian people get divorced. Divorce is still wrong, and we should not make excuses for divorce. All Christians muddle through many different circumstances, and pray, praise, and give thanks for being able to live under God's grace. In the same manner, women with children need to deal with the circumstances they are in. Many Christian women do need to work outside the home and struggle to be with their children as well. I know of women that have worked from midnight to 7AM so they can be home when their children are home. I know of women that do daycare in their homes so they can be with their children. Women can be very resourceful. My point is this: It is the responsibility of parents to care for children because God gave the children to them.

I know from my own experience that my presence in the home gives my children security and confidence in this unstable world. Don't you wonder why there are so many children going to counselors, taking so much medication, and having all sorts of emotional and behavioral problems? Who are raising these children? Having 12 children, I can assure you I am dealing with 12 different personalities with a variety of combinations of the flaws, which I have



mentioned, that are in the genes. Life is a challenge...for them...and for Dad...and for me! Someone has to manage this. It is usually Mom. It just is more practical. The baby is born and the child is totally dependent on someone to care and feed him. While she's at it in her 'spare time' she can cook, do laundry, and clean up and since she's with the children, she can listen and teach them as well. And talk theology.

This flies in the face of equal rights. This is not fair! Well God created man and woman. This argument is with God. Quite frankly, I don't have time to argue with God. I have to take care of all these kids He gave me! And besides that, how stupid to argue with God! Why would a mother not want to nurture the family God has blessed her with? The family is the first institution God created when He created Adam and Eve. And God said this is good and be fruitful and fill the earth. Genesis 1:28

Our children have been attending public schools since we moved to East Grand Forks in November of 1997. Our children have had many conversations with friends and teachers, mostly about evolution and the differences in Lutherans and other religions. The children have really learned, and Rolf and I have too, about what is being taught in the public schools, especially in our area. A false gospel is taught by many teachers who consider themselves Christian. Our daughter Mary, who is now 12 years old, loves to sing. Mary came home last spring saying that she didn't like the music program that her class was working on. I encouraged her to cooperate, thinking she was being too critical. Mary wasn't. They sang songs about how peace can be accomplished if people would just cooperate. Mary sang in a duet singing how she was my hope and future. As we were walking home from the program, I told Mary that she did such a nice job, but my hope is not in her, but in Jesus. My hope for her is that she would always trust Jesus and have a happy life on earth till she went to heaven. " I know Mom!" with a big beautiful smile. "I told you it was awful!" I hugged her and told her I was happy she knew Jesus was her only peace.

Did I learn? NOOOOO! Last January Mary came home saying she did not want to be in chorus. She just thought the whole program was stupid and it was disrespectful to parents. She showed me the part that she told her chorus teacher she did not want to do. The teacher tried to give her another part that had something to do with 'God' when Mary refused to do the first assignment, but Mary told her that she did not want to do a speaking part. Again I encouraged her to cooperate in the singing and commended her on her judgment in not doing the parts. Boy, oh, boy. Mary was right! It was awful! The program started out and ended with the children singing a prayer in Latin

and Hebrew. I'm sure only a few knew the songs were prayers. I didn't until my Pastor husband informed me! The program had the children lecture the parents on how to basically raise them, advocating gun control, how there is nothing black and white, likening people with convictions to radical Muslims, racists, and apt to violent behavior. Typical of the devil's way, a true teaching from Jesus to love our neighbor as ourselves, to validate the false teaching that if we all would cooperate we can accomplish world peace. Gag! Gag! Gag! By the way, this teacher is a very nice lady. Aren't they all so very nice? She also puts her children in daycare so she can teach my child to instruct me on how to be a better Mom. I doubt she gets the irony of this picture.

When our son, John, was in the High School musical Joseph's Amazing Technicolored Dream Coat, he refused to sing a particular song within the play. The director was annoyed. Rolf and I attended the play. The high school students did a great job, but we were amazed and offended that this story could be told about Joseph without mentioning God. This Bible story is wonderful to impress upon young adults how Joseph could not sin against God when for all the world it looked as if God was not looking out for Joseph. Joseph was steadfast and faithful having confidence that God loves him. This virtue wasn't even hinted at.

Our sons, Christian, Andrew, and James in 3 different choirs, have refused to sing songs that out and out deny the Gospel. 'Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free? No! There's a cross for everyone.' These teachers and many of these students, happen to be 'Lutheran,' don't know or believe that Jesus indeed had to bear the cross alone to set the world free from sin and everlasting death. How sad! We very much need to teach, encourage, and talk theology to reassure our children. Children are also persecuted for having convictions. The children need to talk to someone when this happens. When children talk theology, God's Word does not return empty.

We have had similar experiences in Lutheran schools. One of my sons had a teacher who said that he thought Luther made too big of deal of the real presence in the Lord's Supper in his discussion with Zwingli and should have gotten along to be united against the Catholic Church. I was amazed that Lutheran teachers would listen to and encourage their students to listen to Christian rock. These teachers apparently didn't realize that this was no different than encouraging the students to attend non-Lutheran churches.

I walk in danger all the way; The thought shall never leave me  
That Satan, who has marked his prey, Is plotting to deceive me.  
This foe with hidden snares May seize me unawares  
If e'er I fail to watch and pray; I walk in danger all the way.

ELH 252 v. 1

I thank God for parents that homeschool their children. These parents are making it clear that they are responsible for their children's education. It is very obvious our culture is suffering because our children are being raised by officials of this and that. Parents have abdicated their responsibilities to others. To whom did God give these children? Not to the state. I am not advocating homeschooling. Parents have to do what is best for their children, whatever their circumstances happen to be. But if parents understand that it is their duty to teach and influence their children, they will be blessed with results that honor them and especially God. Indeed a light unto the world.

God's Word is our great heritage, And shall be ours forever;

To spread its light from age to age Shall be our chief endeavor.

Through life it guides our way; In death it is our stay, Lord, grant, while worlds endure,

We keep its teachings pure, Through-out all generations. ELH 583

There will be days a child will not say more than "Hi Mom. What's there to eat?"

But that same child can just about talk me to death about something or other at any given time. Usually it is not much to take note. But there are plenty of times with all my children I was glad I was there. Just to talk. Despite our flaws, we want our children to reflect what we believe is right and wrong. We want our children to know we look to the Word of God to guide us and the Word of God will guide them too. We want our children to talk and live theology. How can my

children talk to me if I'm not there and if need be, bring a problem to the attention of their father.

These flaws that are in the genes can have a flip side that can be put to the glory of God. Parents need to guide the children. Think of the great Bible Heroes. Abraham, Sarah, Ruth, David, Daniel, Peter, Paul and even Martin Luther. Do you think they were perhaps stubborn, strong-willed, or unreasonable? Mothers cannot take raising children lightly. We have to resist our culture that wants to help us raise our children.

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, know from who you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. II Timothy 3:14-16

### 3. Be there to teach your children manners.

God gives us children. What is wonderful about having children is they keep one in reality whether you like it or not. In my case, I was so busy changing diapers for so many years that I was slow at seeing some of the reality. It was probably a good thing. These flaws that I was so willing to live with are in the genes! And if that isn't bad enough, these flaws of MINE, that I have learned to live with, are in the genes too! Somehow these flaws are more annoying in children. So here we are poor miserable sinners committed to loving and caring for one another. It isn't always easy. It very much helps to remember Christ and His love for the Church. A Christian family is the church. Repent, forgive, bear one another's burdens. And talk theology.

Teaching children manners. I hate this job! There are days I think all I am doing is telling the kids how to behave. So be it. The reward is worth it. "Don't talk to your brother like that!" "You wouldn't want to be treated like that." "That is no way to talk." "That is no way to behave." "Stop bossing her around! Especially when I am right here!" "Stop yelling." "Have you done your memory work?" "Have you cleaned your room." "Quit mumbling!" Nag! Nag! Nag! This hateful job when done benefits the whole world! We should always show respect to our children and demand they show respect to one another. Showing your anger at

their thoughtlessness and selfishness represents God's anger towards sin. Just remember God's anger and mercy with Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and in many other Bible Stories.

I remember visiting with a vicar on our side porch in Racine . He was about 40 years old and single. He was asking me, with admiration in his eyes about different experiences as a mother of, I think at the time, 11 children. He had asked if I had to do it over again would I? I told him if I weren't a Christian I would not want to have any children. The vicar was shocked. "But why?" he asked. I answered with " Children cost money, give you grief, and break your heart, are ungrateful no matter how you try to care for them." And I went on and on. Poor guy stared at me. The admiration in his eyes faded away. I was in a low mood and discouraged. I had about 3 or 5 teenage boys at the time. I went on to tell him, as a Christian I took great comfort that as I teach my children the forgiveness of sins that they will forgive me all my failings as a mother. I could have confidence in raising the children God blessed us with by teaching them the Gospel. It is a hard job to raise children and I don't really think I'm very good at it. So this way my children learn to forgive me as Jesus forgives them. I take great comfort in that. And it gives me confidence in my children to face the future and raise children of their own. The Lord's Prayer that Jesus wants us to pray comforts me more and more as the days go by.

Our Father, Who art in heaven.

What does this mean?

God would hereby tenderly invite us to believe that He is our true Father, and that we are His true children, so that we may ask Him with all boldness and confidence, as children ask their dear father. ELH p. 33

When we go to teacher/parent conferences, we are almost always told how polite and nice our kids are. At first I was surprised and relieved. I know my children are not always so well behaved. I know this because I live with them. Despite their sinful nature they have managed to honor us. Our children learn how to be polite and nice because we teach them at home how to treat one another and to respect the authority of their parents. This is how God wants the

family to be. People are more willing to talk theology with Christians when they are treated with kindness and respect.

We are God's house of living stones, Builded for His habitation;

He through baptismal grace us owns Heirs of His wondrous salvation;

Were we but two His name to tell, Yet He would deign with us to dwell With all His grace and His favor. ELH 211 v. 3

4. Go to church, pray, praise, and give thanks.

I cannot emphasize enough that parents must take their children to church if the parents want their children to grow up and go to church. This is where parents teach their children more than anywhere other than their home. When parents attend church with their children, the Christian family is encouraged and strengthened as they are nourished in the Word and Sacraments.

The Church's one foundation Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;

She is His new creation By water and the Word.

From heav'n He came and sought her To be His holy bride; With His own blood He bought her, And for her life He died. ELH 486 v. 1

In preserving the Christian home one needs to focus on Christ. Heaven is not a reality without Christ. God has given us the means to help us be confident in salvation and everlasting life in Christ: His Word and the Sacraments. These means are given to the church. These means are there to help us through trials, tribulations, and especially facing death. As the centuries have passed by the church has collected a wealth of teaching tools to focus on God's Word and Sacraments. We should appreciate God's gifts to us to help us in preserving our Christian families.

The historic liturgies of the church have taught me to love God's Word and the Sacraments. The historic liturgies have taught me to cherish Bible stories. The historic liturgies give me Jesus. That is what the liturgy is for. The historic liturgies have comforted and taught Christians, young and old in all stations of life, given wisdom and confidence to face the world we live in for hundreds of years. It is a teaching tool, a comforting tool, and a confession of faith. Use it. Cling to it. Rejoice in it. When children grow up with the liturgies of the Hymnary or Hymnal parents are giving them something to guide them to churches they can trust to provide them their spiritual needs. You give them a tool to help them remember theology in discussing with others, to comfort them in trials, to find and be at home with the communion of saints when the children may be hundreds of miles away from their parents or long after their parents have departed from this earth.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your free Spirit.

ELH p.70

As mothers we want to see all of our children in heaven. We can't store up our treasures for heaven, but our children are the only treasures God gives us that we can hope to have in heaven with us. We know this because Jesus treasures children. When we teach our children that the church is there to nourish their faith, to provide forgiveness for their sins, to give comfort in sorrow, to give them peace with God, and to give joy beyond all understanding, we are teaching them the church is home for the Christian this side of heaven.

Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You ... ELH p.75

5. Encourage your Pastor to be faithful to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and pray for him.

From my experience in listening to pastors bemoaning the fact that parishioners make unLutheran requests for various services, whether Sunday mornings, weddings or funerals, I have come to the opinion that the reason our Lutheran churches get weakened is because the Pastors get worn down by whining and complaining. You know. Like Moms get worn down by whining and complaining. I know from my own experience as a mom.

Parents should make their children aware that the pastor is their shepherd. Parents should listen to the sermons and encourage the children to listen. Parents should thank the pastor for sermons, Bible classes and for teaching their children so the children will learn to appreciate this as well. Parents should ask questions and discuss theology with their pastor so the children will learn to do this as well. Your pastor is a poor miserable sinner who needs encouragement to stay faithful to his ordination vow, that is, the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Parents want their pastors to serve faithfully according to the will of Christ our Lord. The responsibilities for the pastor can be overwhelming, but what joy and encouragement it is for faithful pastors to talk theology with his parishioners! This is spiritually healthy for the children to witness. Talking theology, especially with faithful pastors, gives Christians confidence in talking theology with others. Remember to pray for your pastor.

To me the preaching of the cross Is wisdom everlasting;

Thy death alone redeems my loss; On Thee my burden casting,

I, in Thy name, A refuge claim From sin and death and from all shame- Blest be Thy name, O Jesus! ELH 437 v. 6

6. Take time to have your own devotions and pray for strength and wisdom.

Being a Christian is overwhelming in this sinful and wicked world. This is why God in His love and mercy has given us His Word, the Sacraments, pastors, and the church. God gave us these to encourage us in our weakness, in our sorrow, in conflict, and in joy and happiness. Our heavenly Father knows us better than we know ourselves. A Christian must take every opportunity to listen to God when He speaks. Going to Church and receiving the Lord's Supper gives strength beyond all understanding. Reading a devotion before the whole house comes alive has given me courage to face another day. I highly recommend



Luther for the Busy Man and Laache: Book of Family Prayer. I find that the Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary is handy to have for devotions. It has the Catechism, the Augsburg Confession, Psalms, prayers as well as hymns.

I have gone through different stages in my life. I sometimes wake up in the morning not knowing if I completed the Lord's Prayer before I went to sleep. I take comfort that Jesus taught us this prayer and knows my heartfelt cry and needs. I have often rocked babies singing hymns. I could feel my baby snuggle secure in my arms as I was encouraged and comforted by the hymns. When I read Bible stories to my children, I am enriched and strengthened as well as the children. Reading and helping children with memorizing the Catechism is very encouraging. Your devotion to the Word of God will always strengthen and keep you prepared to trust God even when the world seems to be falling apart. You need to have this strength to give confidence to your children. I take great comfort that our heavenly Father indeed holds onto me for Jesus' sake. This encourages talking theology.

Christ alone is our Salvation, Christ the rock on which we stand;

Other than this sure foundation Will be found but sinking sand.

Christ, His cross and resurrection, Is alone the sinner's plea;

At the throne of God's perfection Nothing else can set him free. ELH 484 v. 1

7. Eat meals together as a family on a regular basis and pray.

In the Grand Forks Herald, February 21, 2003 an article of "a University of Michigan study of children's time found that more meal time at home was the strongest predictor of better achievement scores and fewer behavior problems. Further more, the study determined mealtime was more powerful than time spent in school, studying, church, playing sports and art activities." I wonder how many of these meals include family devotions? This study shows that children need their parents to talk to in what is important in their daily lives. Why? God made it that way. Remember...As the head of the family should teach....visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the 3rd and 4th generations..... Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Unfortunately, we do not always take the time to have devotions after meals. It is our own fault. We encourage our children to get involved in school activities and get jobs. This can be good, but we must as parents strive to keep control of what is most needful for our children. I am relieved and happy to say that our children make it known to their teachers, coaches, and employers that they need to be home by 6 PM for supper. It is not too often they miss meals during the week. We allow for exceptions, but insist the exceptions cannot become the rule. From the time my kids get home from school until after supper, the kids talk to me or their Dad. They talk about all kinds of things. And very often they express concern about what teachers, friends, or other students say concerning theology. They talk to each other too! I am amazed what an influence we have been over our children. I'm not bragging! I'm very thankful. I'm saying this because I never think I'm teaching them enough. On the other hand, we do talk theology with our children.

How do you get your children to love God and the church? Teach them at home! That is what so impressed me about my husband's family. God gave these children to mothers and fathers to care and nurture. It is not anybody else's responsibility. It is so easy in this world to think that somebody else is going to teach skills, religion, and anything else that needs to be for the children. There is an expert for everything and for everyone!!! The church has unwittingly failed to respect and encourage parents in their role for their children. We have Sunday schools to teach Bible stories to the children. This is good. Are the parents teaching Bible stories to them at home? Are the parents attending Bible class while the children are in Sunday school? In everything parents do and say, they are teaching their children. Do the children attend a Christian Day School ? That can be good. Are the parents talking about the teachings of the Bible at home? Are not the teachers doing a job for parents? Are the teachers faithful? How do parents know if they don't teach and talk theology to and with their children? Parents should not abdicate their responsibilities in teaching their children the Word of God. Our culture is suffering from a couple of generations or more where parents have abdicated their responsibilities for their children to the state, church, and school, public or private. Our churches should be bursting at the seams and busy setting up mission churches all over the world because the children have been taught the way of salvation. But sadly, the children have not always learned the Law and the Gospel. The children have not had impressed upon them that the church is there to provide the forgiveness of sins in the Word and Sacraments. So they have left the church, or have gone to a "feel good" church. After all they sing those fun songs too. It makes them feel

good. What have they been taught? Self-esteem or humility? Were they taught sin, repentance, and Jesus' blood on the cross for sinners?

O almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess to You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them, and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being. ELH p. 61

Ephesians 6:1-4 "honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right". The family that prays together, stays together. Even the secular world acknowledges the parents are the ones who really teach the children. What do Christian parents want to teach their children?

Lord, keep us steadfast in thy Word; Curb those who fain by craft and sword Would wrest the Kingdom from Thy Son And set at naught all He hath done. ELH 589 v. 1

8. Read Bible Stories to your children, sing hymns and pray with them.

Ever since I have attended college I have observed children of pastors, church workers, and Lutheran school graduates that weren't interested in talking theology. Indeed, I observed they didn't know much theology. Quite often the children would know the church politics and gossip more than they did about what the Bible taught. This is nothing new. Laache: Book of Family Prayer was published 1884. The first week of Epiphany, Laache urges parents to pray for their children. He points out it is so sad when we observe children of Christian parents leave the faith. Laache asserts that the parents did not faithfully pray for them. This is one reason I am so keen in talking theology with my children. So I urge parents as well to teach and sing hymns and pray with their children. This is also talking theology.

God rewards parents who read and teach their children to treasure God's Word. Your children learn to talk theology, especially with you. This gives them confidence in God's Word. God wants all His children to turn to Him in

everyway. When children see their parents humble themselves under God's Word and tender care, the reward is great. . Only God's Word and the Sacraments can give this confidence. The Marks of the Church. The B-I-B-L-E. The Preached Word. Holy Baptism. The Lord's Supper. That is all we have to offer our children and it is our duty to do it and be confident that God will be faithful in what He has offered for us to give to our children. Hymns are prayers to God. These hymns keep us mindful of what God has done for us in Jesus and we pray with thankfulness and for strength. Pray for your children.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

What does this mean?

The good and gracious will of God is certainly done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done also among us.

How is God's will done?

God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil counsel and will, which would not let us hallow His name nor let His kingdom come, such as the will of the devil, the world and our own flesh; but strengthens and keeps us steadfast in His Word and in faith until our end. This is His good and gracious will.

9. Encourage Christian women.

We very much need to encourage one another. It can be lonely being a wife and mother that cares for the Christian home. Being a mobile society, many Christian wives and mothers are far from family and this can be difficult. The people of the local church can be a real source of support. We have started a monthly Bible study hoping to encourage young mothers with children to attend. We have had mothers and grandmothers with or without pre-school aged children, or daycare children. It is a great therapy group and we talk theology. I have no doubt your pastor would be delighted to start one if your congregation doesn't already have one like it. Just ask around and don't get discouraged if only 1 or 2 come. Your faithful pastor will be delighted to teach and talk theology with any number.

We have also had a monthly Sunday evening home Bible study with families taking turns hosting. The children go off on their own to play with each other

while the young and older adults have the pastor lead them in a Bible study. This is another great therapy group and we talk theology.

Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean?

God certainly gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all the wicked;

but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to acknowledge this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread?

Daily bread includes everything needed for this life, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, fields, cattle, money, goods, God-fearing spouse and children, faithful servants and rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, order, honor, true friends, good neighbors, and the like.

10. Repent, pray, praise, and give thanks.

The reality is the world is cursed against man and it is full of sin. The reality is our children are sinners. The reality is that parents are sinners. The reality is that women marry sinful men and that men marry sinful women. Comfort is the reality that God forgives us all our sins for Christ's sake. We can cling to the cross and praise God for his love and mercy in the death of His dear Son and our precious Savior. We can't do anything right! But God looks at us through Jesus and is well pleased. We humbly look to our Heavenly Father through our brother and His dear Son Jesus knowing He loves us as a loving Father. The reality is our children will sooner or later see us as sinners. In preserving the Christian family for Jesus' sake, we must teach them that we live under God's grace. It is by God's grace we are saints who are washed in the blood of the Lamb in Holy Baptism. We must teach our children to treasure the Bible, the historic liturgies, the Catechism, the hymns that confess and comfort, and to boldly pray to our heavenly Father in order to preserve the Christian family. In doing this we preserve our children from their flesh, the devil, and the world.

I interspersed this presentation mentioning Bible Stories, parts of the liturgies, the Catechism, and hymns to impress how these have kept and comforted many Christians in the true faith throughout generations. If parents continue to

use these precious gifts, Christians will continue to be kept and comforted in the true faith for generations until Jesus coming. So as the world sees a mother's curse in her concern and worry for her children, it does not have to be for the Christian mother. With the Bible, the liturgies, the Catechism, and the hymns, mothers can teach and talk theology with their children. This also strengthens, encourages, forgives, blesses and gives confidence for the parents to freely pray to their heavenly Father. We all need Jesus for eternal life. Our Christian desire is to encourage one another until God calls us to our eternal home.

I grew up with deaf parents. My great-aunt took my brother and me to Sunday school and church most every Sunday. We went with my parents to church once a month on a Friday evening when the Pastor for the deaf from Detroit , Michigan came to do services for the deaf in the area we lived. When my Dad died, it occurred to me that we didn't talk theology. I just knew my Dad had gone to heaven, because it was important for my parents that we go to church. But I doubted. Then my husband preached at my father's funeral with the text "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." Mark 16:16 . That doctrine from Jesus is such a comfort to me. God's Word does not return empty.

When my father-in-law died, we were crushed with grief. I became all the more aware how sad God is at sin. The wages of sin is death. I also became all the more aware how Robert prepared his family for his death by faithfully teaching them the Bible, the Catechism, the historic liturgies, the hymns, to love the church with the Word and Sacraments, and talk theology. Remembering his example gave me courage to face the future on this earth during a very painful, bittersweet time. The Bible, the Catechism, hymns, the church, the historic liturgies, the Word and Sacraments are tools for preserving the Christian Family. And don't forget to talk theology.

My brother-in-law expresses it well in this hymn that he wrote:

#### AROUND THE THRONE THEY STAND

Around the throne they stand,

The patriarchs, the prophets, martyrs all.

They bow before the Lamb,

They see His face and at His feet they fall.

The saints and angels join;  
Their never-ending chant with palms they raise.  
They rise to sing their song,  
A holy crowd prepared for endless praise.

Around the throne of God  
Ten thousand times ten thousand tongues do sing.  
They sing of God's great grace;  
They laud a risen Savior who did bring  
Salvation from all sin,  
Whose life and death through death to life them drew.  
To God and to the Lamb  
Their voices shout salvation's story true.

Around the font of grace  
Are children. God to them new life does give.  
Here faith in Christ is born,  
That those thus born may now and ever live.  
God's faithful servant speaks;  
Upon their heads God's Word of life is poured.  
This gracious flood bestows  
Forgiveness, life, salvation From the Lord.

Around the bread and cup  
God's people gather time and time again.  
All sin and guilt here drown;  
His offering cancelled all that could condemn.  
The body and the blood  
Of Christ, the Son of God, they all partake,  
And now the Father hears  
All prayers His children bring, for Jesus' sake.

Around the throne of God  
The saints above and we on earth now stand,  
And all God's children here  
And those above who sing at His right hand,  
Divided by the veil of death,  
See death's dark veil now torn away,  
And sing in common voice  
To Father, Son and Spirit endlessly.

By Daniel Preus – June 2000 In honor of Donna Preus on her  
75th birthday- in memory of Robert Preus

Dorothy Preus

April 12, 2003

Women's Retreat



Schwan Center

Trego , Wisconsin