

September 1, 2013 by Steve Brandon



The Next Generation

Joshua 24

1. The LORD Has Been Faithful (verses 1-13).
2. Serve the LORD (verses 14-28).

When people find out that I'm a pastor of a church, one of the most commonly asked questions that I get is: "How big is your church?" I usually answer the question the same way. I say, "We are about a hundred, with half children."

At that point, I often get the same response, "That's good," they say. "Children are the future of the church." And that is very true. Sadly, this is not true of many churches. There are many churches that are filled with mostly older people, rather than mostly younger people.

I remember talking with one pastor in town who affectionately referred to his church as the "geriatric church." He said this because there were so many older folks in the church. I remember having a conversation with some other pastors in town. I didn't know them very well. At one point, the conversation turned to the demographics of our churches. One of them said that the average age of their congregation was probably 65 years old. Another one said that the average age of their congregation was probably 75 years old. At that point, I told them that our average age was probably 18! They were amazed at that! We quickly came to realize that we were pastoring totally different churches.

I am grateful to be here with all of the children, with all of the future. I am thankful to have all of you children involved in the life of the church. I am thankful to the LORD for each one of you. May the LORD use you mightily in years to come.

But, with the children comes a responsibility. If the children of the church follow the LORD, then the church has a bright future. If the children of the church turn away from the LORD, then the church has a dismal future.

This morning, as we come to our time in the Scriptures, I want for us to think about the future of the church. I want for us to think about the children of the church. I want for us to think about our homes. I want for us to think about the legacy that we will leave. My message is entitled, "The Next Generation."

If you haven't done so already, I invite you to open your Bibles to Joshua, chapter 24. This chapter finds us at the end of Joshua's life (Joshua 23:14). Joshua 23:14 says, "Now, behold, today I am going the way of all the earth," which means, "I'm dying" (1 Kings 2:2). Like Moses did a generation before him, Joshua summoned everyone to himself and gave them his final message. He was thinking about the next generation of Israelites in the land. He calls the Israelites to be faithful to the LORD.

It is this message that I want to look at this morning, as we all think of our "Next Generation." The scope of my message this morning will not delve into every detail of this chapter. Yet, there are a few principles here that I want for us to consider.

This chapter breaks down into two simple sections. The first has Joshua recounting God's faithfulness to Israel throughout their history. The second is a call for Israel to serve the LORD. I want to work my way through these points, and then I want to give some practical application to my second point.

First of all, Joshua recounts how, ...

1. God Has Been Faithful (verses 1-13).

Joshua 24:1-13

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God. Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau I gave Mount Seir to possess it; but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt. Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst; and afterward I brought you out. I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. But when they cried out to the Lord, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them and covered them; and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness for a long time. Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land when I destroyed them before you. Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand. You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Thus I gave them into your hand. Then I sent the hornet before you and it drove out the two kings of the Amorites from

before you, but not by your sword or your bow. I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'

The story of the people of Israel is a story of the faithfulness of God. And Joshua tells this story. He goes all the way back in Israel's history to the beginning.

The beginning of Israel's history didn't begin in Israel. It began in Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 11:31). It began with Abraham, the son of Terah. Abraham's family wasn't a godly family by any means. Verse 2 tells us that they "served other gods." According to Jewish tradition, Abraham's father was an idol maker. But, God was merciful and showed grace to Abraham. He said to him, ...

Genesis 12:1-3
"Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house,
To the land which I will show you;
And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

God was faithful to His promise. God brought Abraham to the land of Canaan. In his old age, God gave him a son -- Isaac. Over the course of time, God gave Isaac a son -- Jacob.

When there was a famine in the land, God rescued Jacob and his family. He did this in a miraculous way. He sent Joseph ahead of the rest of Jacob's family (Genesis 45). Although Joseph was originally sold into slavery by his brothers to a travelling band of Ishmaelites, Joseph eventually found favor in Pharaoh's eyes. Joseph became vice-ruler in Egypt. Joseph held the food of the world in his power. When Jacob's sons showed up, Joseph not only provided them food, but also a place to stay. They dwelt in the land of Goshen. God was faithful to His people.

When the sons of Israel began to multiply in Egypt, and when "a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph" (Exodus 1:8), the people of Israel were enslaved by Egypt. But, again, God rescued His people. He did so in a stunning way. He sent 10 plagues upon Egypt to display His power and to make a mockery of the Egyptians (Exodus 10:2). I love how Joshua 24 says it, "I plagued Egypt." (verse 5). "I tormented them. I overwhelmed them. I was a thorn in their side. Eventually, they let you go."

But, God's tormenting of the Egyptians didn't end with the death of the firstborn among all the land. God hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he chased after them (Exodus 14:4, 8-9). And God delivered Israel through the Red Sea (verse 6). And God "brought the sea upon [the Egyptians]" (verse 7). God was faithful to His people.

Even in their wanderings in the wilderness, God was faithful to His people. He gave the Amorites into their hands (verse 8). He gave Moab into their hands (verses 9-10). He gave Jericho into their hands (verse 11). He gave "the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite ... into [their] hands" (verse 11). God was good to His people.

Look at Joshua's conclusion in verse 13, ...

Joshua 24:13
I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'

They were in the land of promise! They were living in homes they didn't build, eating the fruit of the land that they didn't plant. How merciful and how gracious was God to Israel!

Indeed, God Has Been Faithful (verses 1-13). And God's faithfulness didn't merely end with the Israelites. God's faithfulness has extended to us, today. God's faithfulness has extended to all who believe in Jesus.

Just as Joshua told the story of God's faithfulness to Israel, so also can I tell the story of God's faithfulness to all who believe in Christ.

I don't know your story exactly. But, I do know where your story began. Just as the story of Israel began with Abraham in a family of idol makers, so your story has its beginning in sin as well.

In Ephesians 2, Paul tells us how we were "dead in [our] trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). He tells of how we "lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3). Because of our sin, God's wrath is upon us. And yet, God has been faithful to us. He hasn't left us in our sin. He has loved us instead.

Romans 5:8 says, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Upon the cross, Jesus

Christ paid the penalty for our sin. And for many of you, He brought someone to you the good news. He brought someone to you to tell us of what Jesus did on the cross. He brought someone to tell you of Jesus and His sacrifice for our sin. He brought someone to call you to believe in Him!

And for many of you, God has opened your eyes to see the glories of Jesus. And you have believed. And you are saved from your sin -- not by your own works, but "by His doing you are in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:30). And now, you can look forward to glory in heaven with Christ someday.

Am I describing you? Are you believing in Christ this morning? Has God been faithful to you?

I trust that this is your heart as well this morning. I know enough of you to know that it is. I'm so glad that many of you do serve the LORD.

But, Even if you are here this morning and not believing, God has still be faithful to you. He has sustained you to this day. He has brought the good news of Jesus Christ to you. He has given you yet another opportunity to believe. And so, I call you to repent of your sin and believe in Christ!

Let's get back to our text. Joshua says, the LORD Has Been Faithful (verses 1-13). Secondly he says, ...

2. Serve the LORD (verses 14-28).

Look at verse 14, ...

Joshua 24:14

"Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.

Joshua is aiming for the generation to come. He has reminded them of God's faithfulness. And now, he calls them to serve the LORD. Twice in verse 14 comes the same call: "fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth" and, "serve the LORD." Joshua is simply calling the people of Israel to seek the LORD. Worship Him. Obey Him. Speak of Him. Love Him. Do not love the idols of the lands, but the LORD God of the universe.

This is the same thing that Moses called Israel to do.

Deuteronomy 10:20-22

You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name. He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons in all, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.

This is the same thing that Jesus called us to do. Matthew 22:37 says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." In verse 15, Joshua puts it as plain as could be.

Joshua 24:15

If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

In other words, if you don't want to serve the LORD, then don't. Serve some other god. Serve the gods that Abraham's family served. Or serve the gods that the Egyptians served. Or serve the gods of the lands. Simply make it clear. Either serve the LORD, or some other god of your choosing.

A similar call could easily come to us as well. If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord Jesus, then choose some other god to serve. Serve the god of money. Serve the god of pornography. Serve the god of immorality. Serve the god of tolerance. Serve the god of pleasure. Serve the god of politics. Serve the god of your career. Serve the god of your youthful health. Serve the god of abortion and same sex marriage.

But, before you jump into one of these gods, consider Joshua's first point. Consider the faithfulness of God. The LORD Has Been Faithful (verses 1-13). Over and over and over he has proved Himself as worthy to be trusted. You can look to Biblical examples. You can look to examples of those you know, who are right here in this room. Many of us have found God's faithfulness to be worthy of our trust. And day by day we are demonstrating it more and more.

And know this, none of these other gods will ever ultimately satisfy. You will never have enough money. You will never satisfy the lusts of the flesh. You will never find satisfaction in your earthly status. You will never find deliverance in the government. You will not be young forever. Soon, you will grow old and die, like the grass or the flower of the field (Isaiah 40:8). You will only find satisfaction in the LORD.

That's why Joshua says at the end of verse 15, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Joshua led the people well. They wanted to follow in Joshua's example. Three times in the text we hear the people of Israel vowing to serve the LORD.

Joshua 24:16-24

The people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; for the Lord our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. The Lord drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God."

Then Joshua said to the people, "You will not be able to serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins.

If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you." The people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the Lord."

Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the Lord, to serve Him." And they said, "We are witnesses."

"Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel."

The people said to Joshua, "We will serve the Lord our God and we will obey His voice."

Despite all obstacles, despite all objections, despite all resistance, the people of Joshua's day stood firm on their resolve. They would serve the LORD.

So, Joshua responded to their pledge making a covenant with the people of Israel. Look at verse 25, ...

Joshua 24:25-28

So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God." Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance.

Now, I'm not going to make a covenant with you today. But, I am going to give you another book. A few months ago, there was a great deal a book written by Jason Helopoulos, entitled, "A Neglected Grace: Family Worship in the Christian Home." And so, I purchased a bunch of copies, enough so that every family gets a copy. I want to encourage you to read it. It's a short little book. It's a little over 100 pages. The pages aren't big. It will take only a few hours so read the book.

Its aim is to encourage the practice of family worship. This is not a new topic to Rock Valley Bible Church. If you have been around for any period of time, you have heard the term. You know what I'm talking about. I'm talking about worshiping the LORD in your homes with your families. Singing praise to God together. Reading the Bible together. Praying together.

To this you may add some things, perhaps memorizing verses together. Perhaps working through some catechism together. Perhaps an extended time of teaching and instruction. Perhaps reading through a Christian book together. There are many ways to do family worship in your home.

This Sunday, I simply want to encourage you all in this practice once again. Perhaps you have heard about it before. Perhaps you have tried it before. Perhaps you have stopped (for one reason or another). I want for you to consider trying once again.

I believe that it's that important. We, as a church, can make some impact upon the lives of our children. But, the major impact that will be made in the lives of our children spiritually will be done in the homes. I'm simply calling for you parents to make the LORD a reality in your homes.

Joshua didn't say, "but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (verse 15) for nothing. It is as if he was calling on all of the fathers in the congregation that way to vote with their families. "You all decide who or what you are going to serve today. You all lead your families in that decision."

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (verse 15). I believe that Joshua and his wife believed that his children would serve the LORD. They would seek the LORD. They would obey the LORD. They would love the LORD.

So, my call this morning is to you, fathers. If you don't take the initiative, it won't happen.

My hope and prayer is that this Sunday and this book might be the catalyst to get you over the hump. That you might say with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Now, it's not that family worship is the only thing that you need to do to serve the LORD. There is much more to serving the LORD than gathering your family on a daily basis to sing and read and pray together. There are attitudes that you pass along in your car as you travel together. There are values that you pass along at the dinner table as you speak with your children. There is a heart that you pass on as you pray with your children before they go to bed at night. There are other decisions that you make in the course of life that will put on display how faithful the LORD is. He can be trusted.

A few weeks ago, Hunter Mahan was on the golf course. He was competing in the Canadian Open. In fact, he was in the lead. But, when he

received word that his wife had gone into labor, some three weeks early, he boarded a plane and flew straight home to Dallas where he could be with his wife and experience the birth of his child. Doing so forfeited any share he might have of the winnings, which, for the Canadian Open pays more than \$1 million. He said, "When I am done playing golf, I'd rather be noted for being a good husband and good father than anything else."

That decision will be told for years to come. The importance of his decision that day will speak far more loudly than \$1 million. His children will know of his values. They are more important than money.

There is more than Family Worship to help shape the spiritual lives of your children. But, I would argue, Family Worship helps set the direction for everything else. Just as your own consistent Bible reading and prayer time alone sets the direction for your walk with the LORD, and just as the direction of the pulpit helps to set a trajectory for the vision of a church, so also will your time of worship together as a family set the course of the spiritual lives of the next generation.

Whether or not you call your family to set times of worship, you will teach your children about the LORD. A few weeks ago, Tim Challies had a great piece on his blog. It was entitled, "When you pray with your children you are teaching your children to pray." Challies writes, ...

Every night my girls want me to pray with them and for them. If I do not tuck them in at night, or if I forget to pray when I do tuck them in, I can be sure that sooner or later I will hear feet coming down the stairs and then the question: "Daddy, will you pray with us?" Sometimes I think they are expressing a good and heartfelt desire and other times I think they are merely being superstitious, as if bad dreams will plague them and every shadow will frighten them if I do not pray. Either way, I never refuse them.

The other night I neglected to pray with them. It was at the end of a long day, I had fulfilled my parenting duties, I had gone off the clock, I wanted some "me time." And then I heard the footsteps on the stairs. I groaned inwardly. "Daddy, you didn't pray with us!"

So I called them over and prayed with them. It was a perfunctory prayer. It was lacking in enthusiasm and joy and confidence. I have shown more interest in taking out the trash. I sent them back to bed and went back to what I was doing. It was just another little moment in the life of a normal family.

The next morning I woke up and spent some time reading God's Word. My devotions took me to Philippians where, right from the start of the letter, Paul tells that church how and why he is praying for them. Paul deliberately opens up his prayer life in order to teach this church how they ought to pray. In his commentary, Dennis Johnson writes, "How can we learn to pray? Instruction helps, but example is the key." We learn to pray by hearing other people's prayers.

When I had spent a few minutes in the passage, I went for a walk. And as I walked and prayed, and prayed and walked, this thought struck me: When you pray with your children, you are teaching your children to pray. When my girls had crept down the stairs the night before, they gave me an opportunity to teach them. And I had taught them. I had taught them that prayer can be monotone, that prayer can be done in a quick and uninterested and perfunctory manner. I had taught them that prayer is duty more than it is delight. The lessons were not all bad. I had taught them as well that they can, and should, entrust their cares to God and that he is the one who provides for our needs. But still, if that prayer was a teaching opportunity, it was one I mishandled and one I regret.

If my girls had come to me for formal instruction, if they had said, "Daddy, teach us to pray," I would have taught something far different from what I modeled that night. I would have told them to approach God boldly and confidently, trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ. I would have told them to approach God enthusiastically. I would have warned them of the danger of perfunctory prayers which can all too soon tip over into superstitious prayers. I would have warned them against all the things I did.

Tonight they will come to me again, if I do not first go to them. And again I will have the opportunity to pray with them and to pray for them. But now I know this is not a time to fulfill a duty or cross something off my list. When I pray with my children, I am teaching my children to pray. [\[1\]](#)

I commend to you once again the practice of family worship.

Now, one of the things that I really appreciate from this book is the spirit in which Jason Helopoulos has written. You can see it right there in the title. His book is entitled, "Family Worship in the Christian Home: A Neglected Grace."

He makes you feel as if you are missing out on something. And if you are missing out on something, you will want to do it. It's not some obligation. It's a joy that is missed. We want that joy! He spells it out in the introduction. He writes, ...

This is a small and simple book. And I have a small and simple prayer to accompany it. It is my hope that the Lord will use this book to encourage you and your family to introduce family worship in your home or to persevere in it. There is no better time than now for this time-tested and beneficial aspect of the Christian life to be revived.

However, my hopes for a revival of family worship are not meant to place burdensome expectations on Christian homes. ... We all know well that sense of struggle and, at times, failure, in leading our homes in worship. At the outset, I want to make it clear that this book is not intended to heap guilt upon the shoulders of husbands, mothers, or parents who have struggled to lead their homes in family worship. My great challenge in writing this book was to do so in a way that would show the benefits of family worship--how important and beneficial it is for the Christian family--and yet would do so in a way that

would not lead struggling husbands, fathers, and mothers to be weighted down by guilt. If this book increases guilt in the reader, then my prayer is that it quickly goes out of print. Instead, I hope that this book will be an encouragement to the reader to have a true resolve to engage in family worship, but only by, in through, and because of the grace of God. As we approach the subject of family worship it is helpful to be reminded that it is nothing more than our response in the home to God's magnificent and infinite grace. And it is by that grace that we gather together with our family members to delight in His excellent goodness and eternal glory. Family worship is not something we have to do. Our right standing before God is not impacted by whether we lead our families in worship or not. Christ has already accomplished all for our salvation. Rather, family worship, like other spiritual disciplines. Becomes something we want to do. As the individual Christian, changed by God's grace, naturally begins to read the Bible, sing, and pray, so the Christian family impacted by the grace of God will want to gather together to read the Bible, sing and pray. As all the Christian life is lived in grace, so we enjoy and pursue family worship by that same grace.

I am not an expert in family worship. My wife and kids can testify to that. My family and I continue to learn how to do family worship better, more faithfully, more consistently, and with more joy. I confess that it is not always easy, and at times it even seems laborious. But I have seen up-close the fruit that accrues in a family when they worship regularly together in their home. Family worship has benefits that are eternal; and that is worthy of our pursuit. Consider this book an encouragement to that end. [\[2\]](#)

And I hand out his book with the same heart. May the LORD use this book to stir your heart by grace to know the blessings of consistent worship in the home.

The author spends the first three chapters laying a theological foundation for family worship. Then, he spends six chapters with some practicals. His practical recommendations are filled with humility and insight. Here's what he said regarding singing together as a family.

For the vast majority of families, [singing] is initially the most awkward element of family worship. Most of us are not that excited about the voices we have been blessed with! And those around us aren't real sure they are a blessing either! And it is impossible to hide your voice when there are only two, three, four, or five people in the room. But don't let the initial awkwardness and off-key notes deter you from singing praise together as a family. I thought we were decent at singing until we bought a new puppy. The first night we did family worship in the same room as him, he began to howl. I thought it was just the newness of the noise. But the following night he did the same thing. If we can continue to sing, though we make dogs cry out in pain, you can too! [\[3\]](#)

I love his practical counsel on the particulars of family worship. Find the best time for your family. Meet at the same time in the same place. Start slow. Be brief – longer doesn't mean better. Make it a priority. Be flexible. Model the right attitude. Just keep going. Those little bullet points are worth the price of the book.

Furthermore, he has some counsel in here for those of you who are in difficult situations. Perhaps your spouse isn't a believer; what should you do? Perhaps you are a single parent; what should you do? Perhaps your children are resisting you; what should you do? Through all of it, we need to remember that family worship is God's grace.

Again, I appreciate the grace that he gives to encourages us in our failures.

This bears mentioning again: Family worship is an instrument through which God gives us grace ... it is not something that should be a burden. It is a joy. Since it is not to be a burden, we should not be hard on ourselves if we miss a night. What often happens is that a family will miss a night, then two, then three, then a week, and never pick it back up again. Often this happens because it feels as if we are having to start a huge task all over again, and the burden is just too great. As I tell friends and remind myself--if you miss a night, fine--pick it back up the next night. If you miss two nights or three nights or even a week--fine--do not beat yourself up--just pick it right back up. Family worship, like all kinds of worship, is a means of grace and is not to be viewed as a burden or a task to be accomplished. It is something we do in response to God's grace, not to earn it. We often approach it legalistically, and doing so not only kills the joy of worshiping God, but is antithetical to the relationship rooted in grace that we have with God. Worship is not to be a weight around our necks, but a means of lifting our heads up. [\[4\]](#)

On page 41, he gives a great vision for family worship. He writes, ...

Daily family worship provides a continual reminder that we are worshipers of Christ. It has the added benefit of shaping the home around this worship. A family that reads the Bible, prays together, and sings praise to God will begin to have its actions, thought, and words shaped by this daily event. Isn't this the kind of home that we want? As a young parent, I can't tell you how many empty nesters have commented to me, 'Enjoy your children while you have them, because before you know it they will be on their own.' Before our children leave our home, by God's grace, I want them to have experienced a home that is filled with worship. As parents, we want our children leaving the home thankful for many things. It is good that we take them to soccer games and curl up on the couch to watch a television show together. My kids and I love to snuggle on the couch, watch Julia Child cook, and try to imitate her voice. But I don't want that memory to be the dominant one in their minds because those are the kinds of events which dominated our life together.

When our children leave the home, what will they say was the center of the family's life together? Do we want them primarily thankful for parents who watched television with them and attended all their games? Or do we desire that our

children leave the home with an understanding that worship is the center of who we are and what we do and that Christ is what was most cherished? I think all of us would say that our desire, by God's grace, is that our children might say one day, "Our parents were quirky, had many faults, and were by no means perfect. But we know that they loved the Lord, worshiped Him, and were determined to share Christ's love with us". [5]

In fact, if you think about it, Family Worship is the regular reminder of Joshua's final message. As you read through the Bible together, you can't help but to be struck with the same message. The LORD Has Been Faithful (verses 1-13). Serve the LORD (verses 14-28).

As you share your concerns for life and pray over them together, you can't help but to teach your children the same thing. The LORD Has Been Faithful (verses 1-13). Serve the LORD (verses 14-28).

And when your children see answers to prayer, and when your children see how you trust in the LORD, the same message comes through loud and clear. The LORD Has Been Faithful (verses 1-13). Serve the LORD (verses 14-28).

Well, the good news of Joshua's day is that they, indeed, served the LORD. Look at verse 31, "Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel." Apparently, Joshua did something right. This is my hope for the children of Rock Valley Bible Church -- that they would serve the LORD for all of their days.

But, sadly, future generations didn't prove to be so faithful. All you need to do is read the book of Judges. That first generation may have done well, but the next generation failed to do so. And all subsequent generations failed to do so. Rather than serving the LORD, "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

Turn over to Judges 2. Here we will end....

Judges 2:6-10.

When Joshua had dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land. The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the Lord which He had done for Israel. Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of one hundred and ten. And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. May the LORD do a work in the lives of our children.

May they follow the LORD in the next generation.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 1, 2013 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] <http://www.challies.com/christian-living/when-you-pray-with-your-children-you-are-teaching-your-children-to-pray>

[2] Jason Helopoulos, "Family Worship: A Neglected Grace". pp. 15-16.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 59.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 75.

[5] *Ibid*, pp. 41-42.