

Mothers' Encouragement Group
March 8, 2018
Plant Them and Let Them Grow #7

We are in the middle of a discussion about planting our children in the richest of soils, in fact the only soil that will give them all the health-giving nutrients they will need to become strong adults in the Faith, in *our* Faith, in order that they might become able adults working happily for their Savior in one place or another of the Lord's kingdom on this earth.

Before we begin, a big aside: you *are* free to interrupt me! I do want this to be a *discussion*, with input, ideas and questions from you, not just my "bringing you a message" as Dawn said—yikes! Every single one of us has a handle on, and access to, all truth, as much as anyone else. Dawn and I are here to remind you of that truth and to try to give you the benefit of our experience, of our gray hairs (well, mine!), of having lived longer than you have. We began this group going on six years ago responding to Paul's exhortation that **"Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled."** Titus 2:3-5 This is a tall order *and* it has been a wonderfully fulfilling task for me since my own children have left this place to live their lives elsewhere. I love thinking about the things that we talk about in this room and it gives me great pleasure to see you all embracing the hard and wonderful work of teaching your children. I love to hear how each of you is working out the holy principles we find in our beloved Bible. I remember years ago Francine Bergey saying to me, with such a kind sweetness, that she gratefully received the standards and principles of living from my husband's preaching but she looked at my life to see how those standards could be worked out in daily life—no pressure! Not everyone, thankfully, is called to live in this kind of "fishbowl" but we all do observe one another and can learn from that observation, positively and negatively. I submit to you that this is what husbands and wives do, whether they are in the ministry or not: husbands carry the torch, hold up the standard, give the direction, and the wives work out what it means for themselves and for the children. Dawn and I can point you to Scripture, share with you our experience of it with our own children—and I hope we can be humble and transparent enough to share our mistakes as well as our successes—but how to apply truth to each life the Lord has given you, including your own, is up to you! You must live your own life, and as Paul, again, says **"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."** Philippians 2:12-13 "A mind to blend with outward life, while keeping at Thy side...."

So as we think about this work of planting our children in the soil of the Law of God, it is important to remind ourselves, from time to time, that we are not able to produce *perfect* children! or that our children will somehow escape the weaknesses and deficiencies of our own personalities and parenting; the sin that permeates everything in this life—our minds, our souls, our bodies, our relationships, even nature itself—makes perfection impossible and makes the work that our Savior did for us *absolutely necessary*. Perfection is what we must strive for, even though it is impossible, so that we keep our standard of behavior high, all the while realizing that it can never be: we know it and the Lord knows it and therein lays the blessing. What the Lord requires of us is *faithfulness*, not perfection, a spirit of not giving up and of striving towards godliness both for ourselves and for our children. God sees what is *inside*, what we want to do,

what we are trying to do and He rewards what He sees. **I Samuel 16:7b “For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart.”** These are words from God’s own mouth, spoken to Samuel at the time when David was chosen to be king of Israel after Saul. David was said by the Lord to be “a man after God’s own heart.” An astonishing and remarkable thing for God to say about him considering the terrible sins he committed in his life and the children he lost because of those sins. This thought—that God looks on the heart—makes our task both easier and harder at one and the same time! I may have told you some time ago about my friend who worried aloud to her counsellor that she would pass on to her children her own neuroses and problems; the counsellor said, “Of course you will; it is inevitable, but God is big enough for that!” So we can meet our children with mercy because they are fallen creatures just as we are but at the same time work to uphold a high standard of love and obedience to God, making sure that we are looking into our own heart to nurture its love and obedience to Him.

The *absolute, bottom-line, most important* thing you can ever do for your children—in fact, what you *must* do—is to show them your faith, seek to nurture their faith and to *insist* upon their learning who God is and what He requires of them. Remember, **“Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” Romans 4:3 quoting Genesis 15:6 “And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.”** It is *hard* to live by faith! It is hard to pray believing someone is actually listening; to live believing that the Law was spoken by a real Person to real people and that what that real Person said about Himself is true—that He is Love, has loved and will ever love those who love Him. Living by faith means making real-time decisions for ourselves and for our children that demonstrate our belief that God is there, that He made all things, that He made us, loved us and saved us from the biggest consequence of all our messes and therefore requires us to respond to Him in love and obedience. Abraham picked up and moved his entire household to a place where he had never lived before, had no roots in, had no friends or relatives in, because *he believed God*. He certainly didn’t have to do this; God didn’t *make* him. It’s interesting to think about what would have happened if he hadn’t responded the way he did; perhaps the Lord would have had to find another man through which to bless mankind! Israel might have been someone else! We have the same kind of choice before us: to believe God or not to believe Him and while our children are young we make this choice for them as well so that when they are older they will have the habit of believing and obeying already imbedded in their lives.

Back to that soil which we have said is the Word of God. Our children need to be taught its law from the very headwaters of their lives and taught to live in obedience to the principles of its contents—this is the first step in learning to live by faith. The first four commandments of the law of God are meant to teach us who God is, who He isn’t and what our loyalty and obedience to Him requires. We have reminded ourselves that He IS THE CREATOR of the world, of all the life that is in the world and especially of all human beings and as such knows and understands us down to the bottom—God knows who we are and what we are made of. We have reminded ourselves that there is to be NO competition with Him in the love and worship of our hearts. We have reminded ourselves that His name is to be kept full of the meaning of who God is and that we need to take great care that we treat it, not only with respect but with the awe it deserves. Today we talk about the Sabbath day—God’s holy Sabbath that He has given to us.

IV. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Exodus 20:8-11

The LORD, the LORD's worship, the LORD's name, the LORD's day: this is the first and most important part of the law. The rest of the law tells us, in the various areas of life, what obeying the first part of the law looks like—working out what the heart of our God looks like, what pleases Him and what doesn't. Without the first part the second has no foundational reason. Jesus said, **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 22:36b-40**

Over and over Moses warned the Israelites that the LORD is jealous, that He will not tolerate them worshiping anyone else or worshiping Him in a way not commanded. We read in the Pentateuch how God took them into Canaan, the land He promised to them, not because they are such lovely, obedient people—in fact, God calls Israel stubborn and many times He lost patience and nearly wiped them out and would have but for Moses' intercession. No, He brought them into Canaan because the Canaanites were *so wicked* and had no interest in worshiping the true God.

Can we, for a moment, put ourselves in the Lord's place? He made the earth a beautiful, life-giving place, and He made man to live on the earth; He made man special, different from the other animals. He made man and woman to be able to think and to choose, to be like Himself in a way that the other animals and creatures were not. I can imagine Him taking lovely pleasure in the new creatures He had made and, if I may be so bold, was looking forward to sweet conversation and fellowship with Adam and Eve—another kind of being to commune with, to exchange ideas with, to get deep pleasure from, besides what He already had with Himself and His angels in His own glorious home. Then to “watch” Adam choose to obey His arch-rival rather than Himself must have been galling and irritating to say the least. (You understand I am speaking anthropomorphically! as if God did not know what would happen or could not control it or had not Himself been the creator of that arch-rival!) So began the history of life on this earth and the effort the Lord God made to preserve man's ability to choose and to bring him one day back to Himself and able to engage in that wonderful communion with Him that He created us for. Jealous? You bet! And, though it was His perfect love of mankind that set the wheels in motion for our salvation yet, as we read our Bible, we see the Lord pushed time and again to anger over the sin that multiplied on earth. It was not just Israel who offended God with her disobedience; it was everyone—the Canaanites too. It is not just Christians, it is all who live on this earth. God used Israel to clean up Canaan and He communicated with her in a special way so that, through her life of obedience to Him, she might show the Canaanite world that there was a true Creator/God who was responsible for their existence. They were to demonstrate in their national life together how to live in a right relationship with that true God, worshiping Him rightly and obeying His law, which is the expression of His own heart. This is our role too as Christians, showing the world through our life of obedience to God that He exists, that He is not

indifferent to the decisions of men and what a right relationship with Him looks like. This is the life of *faith* and this is the working out of His plan to bring the people He loves back to the place for which they were created, that is, perfect, sweet relationship with God Himself.

So how are we practically to think about the Sabbath day? First, we need to understand that the Sabbath is a gift to us from the Lord—a sweet change, a rest, from the rest of the week. **“For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth...and rested the seventh day.”** God, who did not *need* rest nevertheless rested; He stopped working. He created man to be like Himself and put the need for rest in us. So the Sabbath is a creation ordinance which God took great pains to teach His people as they were on their way to Canaan. We read how the Lord provided manna for them to eat—just enough for each day and when the people gathered more than one day’s worth for their family it spoiled and got nasty bugs in it. Then God told them to gather two days’ worth on Friday so that on the Sabbath they would not be doing the same ordinary thing they had done on the other days. But those who had had their manna spoiled did not do what God said and went out on the Sabbath to gather, only to find nothing; God had not sent any on that day. They went hungry because they *did not believe God*. **Exodus 16:27-30 “On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, ‘How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.’ So the people rested on the seventh day.”** The Sabbath is a holiday, a happy day, a day given to joy and a moment to glory in the fact that we belong to Christ and therefore have no troubles that He does not know and cannot manage. This is living by faith, too, and perhaps takes more of that “faith muscle” to let go of our worries and relax in the knowledge that we are His: we don’t have to gather manna because He provided more than we needed yesterday! Today we get to rest. Lay the worries down and enjoy the relaxation of trust in our very big God!

Second, the Sabbath day is a covenant between the Lord and His people, the outward sign of the inner reality that we are the Lord’s. It is meant for our blessing, for our refreshment, for our comfort and for the renewal of our contract with the Lord. **Exodus 31:12-17 “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, “Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.””** This practice set the Israelites apart from the other people around them and it sets us apart from the unbelieving world around us. It was a witness to them and it is a witness to ourselves that we belong to the Lord, that we believe in the unseen God and that we have another purpose for our lives than what our unbelieving friends and neighbors have and, as we practice setting apart our Sabbath days, we increase our faith and that of our children. It is like kneeling—I have said this before to you. Our kneeling for

prayer is the expression of humility before God but as we kneel, because what we do with our bodies affects our inner selves, we increase that humility in our souls. So with our Sabbaths; whatever we do, teaching our children to do as we do and using our mouths to explain to them why we are doing it, we are increasing our commitment to God, our determination to obey Him as well as our love for Him.

A large part of communicating all this is the practice of the family coming together to church for worship, Sunday by Sunday, Sabbath by Sabbath. **Ezekiel 20** tells us that the Lord gave Israel His law so that they would know how to be saved, how to be happy and how to please God. **Verse 12** says, **“Moreover, I gave them my Sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them.”** So the worship of our Sabbath days becomes the weekly time when we go over again the ground of our faith: our desperate need in the face of a perfectly holy God; the confession of our sin and our repentance from it; His absolution of that sin and His invitation to be His children; the renewal of our resolution to live for Him; and His feeding us with the nourishment of His own body to strengthen us for the coming week.

The attitude with which we come to worship, the deportment we use when we are there and the importance we attach to the things we are doing will all influence our children as they, week by week, build their knowledge of who God is, and who they are, in relation to Him. When I was a child I knew that the church was “God’s House” because my mother told me! (When children are little you may tell them anything and they believe it—that is one of the wonderful things about childhood—it is trusting.) There was no running allowed inside God’s house and certainly no shouting or loud behavior of any kind—even when there was no worship service going on—and when we were in worship, *God Himself was there* and we better darn well behave like it! As a young child I distinctly remember my dad’s big hand over my face during the Pastoral Prayer and feeling my lashes against his fingers: there was absolutely no moving or noise allowed during those *long* moments of prayer. But afterwards, he would slip me a little pink peppermint!

Let me say again some things we have talked about before. No child should be allowed to disrupt any worship service at any time: get up and leave *before* the problem erupts. Years ago the Saxman family worshiped with us; they had something like four or five kids and she was pregnant with twins when we first met them. Those children always sat quietly in the pew upstairs but every now and then Pauline would get up and leave with one of them—usually the youngest. They left quietly and came back quietly and I never heard any commotion at all. I was learning then and in the midst of figuring things out—what was I going to do with my children when I had to deal with them without their father beside me? So I asked her what she did when she left. I will always remember her telling me that she would take them to the ladies room and spank them and if she had forgotten to bring the paddle stick she would take off her shoe and use that. When I marveled that the child didn’t seem to be behaving badly she said, “Well, you can’t disrupt the service, can you? I can always see the problem coming and try to get up and leave before there’s any noise!”

Rob’s office in those days became known as the “inner spanktem!” I was not as skilled as Pauline and often I had to leave with my hand over the mouth of the offending child! Eunice De Soto was the one who first spoke to me about keeping my little children in church and taught me that learning to sit still and gradually participate was beneficial for them in lots of ways, the least of which is controlling an otherwise wiggly body, the greatest of which is realizing that *worship*

is for them too. Their own relationship with the Lord and with the people of God will grow out of this great, hard work that we as parents do, Sunday by Sunday. **Joshua 8:34 & 35: “And afterwards [Joshua] read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.”** Did Joshua say, “OK, parents, these next things are too hard for the kids, send them to children’s church while we read the Law”? No, the children were right there with “all the assembly.”

I came across Katie Pates years ago sitting on the steps in the stairwell with her little daughter who was not allowed back into the sanctuary. She has a “three strikes you’re out!” policy that makes sitting with the family—inside—a desirable thing. Her daughter still had to be quiet and sit still on the steps but got none of the benefits of being able to see and hear what was going on.

May I add a little aside here that going to the potty *before* worship begins will allow you the power to say, “No, you may not go now; you can hold it,” when that older child wants to get up and leave the service and be gone for any number of minutes, missing important steps in the progress of worship.

Laurie O’Ban told me that she would tell her boys to look at the minister, watching everything, especially during the Lord’s Supper. This communicates to them that this worship, this conversation with the Lord, *is for them too!* That, of course, precludes the reading of books or other distractions that keep them quiet but do not encourage their own participation. It took me awhile to realize that I did not need to bring crayons, toys, coloring books etc. that would only make noise when (not if!) they fell on the floor. Eunice taught me just how long one can keep a toddler occupied with one small tupperware container of Cheerios! The others were fine with one pencil and the back of the bulletin. When Dawn began to help me I was free to work with whoever was the one-year-old and the older children were encouraged to write or draw something they heard from the sermon. I used the nursery until the baby was a year old and found it a great blessing not to be pacing the hallways when I had other children inside who needed teaching.

Lead by example. I’ve seen and heard parents talk *out loud* to their children, telling them to be quiet! Duh! I’ve seen adults regularly leave and come back for this or that and unless you’re a deacon with a job to do for the congregation or are in some kind of an emergency there is *nothing* that ought to figure more importantly in your mind than what you are there to do with and for the Lord, which gives very little excuse for leaving in the middle of a worship service. Your attention needs to be on your own conversation with the Lord which communicates to the children that they are not the most important thing just then. In fact, there is *nothing* more important than that you are all there to worship the Lord and that our high, unapproachable God has come to meet us, accepting our praises, forgiving our sins, hearing our requests, giving us ways to become more holy and feeding us with nourishment for the coming week. The children will see quickly that this is something you *need* and they will catch that it is important for them as well but they won’t get this if you are constantly talking to them and attending to them; they must be quiet because now Mama and Daddy are attending to the Lord.

We cannot say too often that worship is for *everyone!* Children’s Church? I don’t think so! Children need to learn to worship right alongside their parents. **II Chronicles 30 & 31:** Hezekiah brought all Israel and Judah back to the worship of God, tearing down all the idols that

had been used in years gone by and instructing them in the proper celebration of Passover, appointing the priests and collecting offerings from the people to give to the Lord and the Lord's house. As with Joshua's assembly, everyone was included in this worship and it was a *joyous occasion!*—that “festal shout” we read about in Psalm 89. **II Chronicles 31:17 & 18:** “**The enrollment of the priests was according to their fathers' houses; that of the Levites from twenty years old and upward was according to their offices, by their divisions. They were enrolled with all their little children, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, for the whole assembly, for they were faithful in keeping themselves holy.**” vss. 20, 21: “**Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and faithful before the Lord...seeking his God...with all his heart, and prospered.**”

Our children will be, even as we are, how they worship. We are as we worship in the kingdom of God, whether strong or weak. We teach them, little by little, bit by bit, more and more of the duties, obligations *and joys* of worship; and when they are grown they'll have it! “**Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O LORD, in the light of your face, who exult in your name all the day and in your righteousness are exalted. For you are the glory of their strength; by your favor our horn is exalted.**” Psalm 89:15-17

Third, our Savior is the judge and has become the interpreter of the Law regarding the Sabbath day. **Matthew 12:1-8** “**At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pick heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, ‘Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.’ He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,” you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.**”” The same story given in Mark ends with these words of Jesus: “**The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.**” **Mark 2:27** Going on in the Matthew passage: vss 9-13 “**He went on from there and entered their synagogue. And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’--so that they might accuse him. He said to them, ‘Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’ Then he said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other.”** Again, this incident recorded in Mark adds the Lord saying, “**‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?’ But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ ...”** Mark 3:4-5

I grew up with the principle that only “works of worship, necessity or mercy” were allowed on Sunday, which I'm sure we derived from the Westminster Catechism question #60: “**Q.** How is the Sabbath to be sanctified? **A.** The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending *the whole time* in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as

is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy.” This put a definite negative spin on how we spent Sundays when I was a child, but somehow we found that the taking of naps was perfectly in keeping with the spirit of our Sabbath-keeping! Was that mercy or necessity? I don’t know!—certainly wasn’t worship of God.

Now obviously there is a strong negative command against “following our own ways” on the Sabbath all over the Bible such as we find in **Nehemiah 13:15ff**: **“In those days I saw in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day....Then I confronted the nobles of Judah and said to them, ‘What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.’”** So Nehemiah took steps to stop this buying and selling on the Sabbath and then said to the Lord, **“Remember this also in my favor, O my God, and spare me according to the greatness of your steadfast love.” Ch.13:22b** And our Savior took a whip and drove the moneychangers out of the temple in Jerusalem quoting **Isaiah** to them as He did: **“It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a den of robbers.” Mt. 21:13** So we know that we ought to be careful and zealous to keep our Sabbaths different from every other day of the week; this is what my family and the church I grew up in sought to do but I now believe that in our careful zeal to keep the Sabbath we began to do the far too easy thing which was, like the Pharisees, make rules about what may or may not be done instead of thinking about what the Sabbath was *for* and then filling the day with the things that would best fulfill that. If Jesus allowed that a poor sheep who fell into a pit ought to be helped out of it and a suffering man, who is more important than a sheep, ought to be helped no matter what day it is then surely we can and ought to be mindful to make the Sabbath day a happy and joyful day for our children, not a burden to them. *How* that is done is up to you but I would suggest that the first step is in your own heart; if the Sabbath is not a joy to you it certainly won’t be for your children either.

Rob has often preached that the Sabbath is a holiday, a day given to joy, and why not since the best thing in the world is the fact that we are the Lord’s and He is ours! Why would we not want to celebrate this fact? Why would we not want to be in His house, renewing our covenant with Him, and then with others who belong to Him, talking of the wonderful things He has done for each of us, enjoying the good blessings He has given us, feasting on delicious food and drink that He has provided? This is why the Sabbath days have never been a part of our Lenten fasts; they are days for celebration and feasting, not for mourning. (When my children were babies I used to allow myself the use of disposable diapers on Sunday!) Our children can look forward to the Sabbath even as we do. It is a day of spiritual refreshment and a day for reaching out to others. (I think I have told you how our Bryonie, when she was six or seven, used to invite folk she met at church home for dinner because she was so in love with the fun of having people in our home!) **Isaiah 56:6-7** tells us **“And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer...”**

Fourth, the Lord has given us wonderful promises if we take Him at His word, live according to what we know from Him and not according to what we see in all the world around

us. Keeping the Sabbath day is one of the purest, most obvious ways to live by faith and if we are faithful in doing this we have this promise from God Himself: **“If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a *delight* and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”** Isaiah 58:13-14 Does it seem a paradox to you, as it does to me, that in “turning away from our own way, from seeking our own pleasure” that we find our best pleasure and happiest delight? Hard enough for us to understand and our children are far behind us! But, we bring them along; we have to since they are the Lord’s too.

Let me finish with something from Edith Schaeffer on this subject from her book Ten Things Parents Must Teach Their Children:

“It is 6:45 on a Saturday night as I write this chapter’s ending. The bells of all the churches in Switzerland have begun to ring. Deep-throated bells, higher bells with a variety of notes, heavy bells with slow, heavy dongs, lighter, faster bells trying to do two notes to others’ one, ringing out over the mountains, over the lakes, over the cities, over the villages, for fifteen full minutes.

“Who listens to them today, in the last period of the twentieth century? What thoughts come into the minds of those who do listen? Many years ago when Christianity predominated, they were the call to prepare for Sunday, to get the children bathed and clothing ready for the morning, to have the bread and pies and cakes prepared for the Sunday meal, to have the house tidied and brushed up for a day of ‘rest and gladness,’ a day without the usual work in fields, factories, gardens, a day when floor scrubblings and window washing would be put aside. The bells say so many things, with so many different ears hearing them and such a variety of responses.

“We often wish we could go back to what seemed like a simpler day and obey the admonition of the bells quietly, ready to go to church without any rush, to walk, quietly gathering flowers in the afternoon in season, or to bundle up against the cold and ski or snowshoe, to sit by the fire eating an apple and drinking hot ‘ovo’ while *Pilgrim’s Progress* is being read, to get the special Sunday toys to be played with only on the rug by the fireside, to write a letter and draw pictures for grandmother, or Aunt Prisca....to have the wonder of singing together as a family, and praying for the ones who have left to be at school or married or working in a distant country.

“Saturday night bells and a nostalgia for a quieter century! But can’t we with determination to put first things first, and with God’s help, prepare for a day that will be within the possibility of our circumstances and geographical location, a different day that will be very real as a reminder of what God has given in the past and of that fabulous rest He is preparing for in the future? There is a day coming that will indeed be our rest, and a time of rest and restoration for all nature.

“Right now, however, we need to prepare for the Lord’s Day each week in a sincere and very real way, so that we and our children may know something of the keeping of the fourth commandment now, for ‘rest and gladness’ as well as worship, for God’s glory as well as man’s good.” [Chapter 4, pp 101-102]

HYMN

O Day of Rest and Gladness

Christopher Wordsworth, 1862

#392, Trinity Hymnal

Sing to the tune Bentley by John Hullah (*Sometime a Light Surprises*)

O day of rest and gladness, O day of joy and light,
O balm of care and sadness, most beautiful, most bright,
On you the high and lowly, through ages joined in tune,
Sing "Holy, holy, holy" to the great God triune.

On you, at the creation, the light first had its birth;
On you, for our salvation, Christ rose from depths of earth;
On you our Lord, victorious, the Spirit sent from Heav'n;
And thus on you, most glorious, a triple light was giv'n.

You are a port protected from storms that round us rise,
A garden intersected with streams of paradise;
You are a cooling fountain in life's dry, dreary sand;
From you, like Pisgah's mountain, we view our promised land.

Today on weary nations the heav'nly manna falls;
To holy convocations the silver trumpet calls,
Where gospel light is glowing with pure and radiant beams,
And living water flowing with soul-refreshing streams.

New graces ever gaining from this our day of rest,
We reach the rest remaining to spirits of the blest.
To Holy Ghost be praises, to Father, and to Son;
The church her voice up-raises to you, blest Three in One. Amen.