

THE HOME MISSION JOURNAL

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WILL be given in prizes to subscribers of THE HOME MISSION JOURNAL, on the following conditions.

First, To one who makes the highest number of words spelled with the letters that spell HOME MISSION JOURNAL, we will give twenty-five dollars; to the next highest number ten dollars; and to the next five dollars; and to the next highest five we will give two dollars each. If there should be a tie between any two or more persons in their number of words, we will then divide the amount among them.

Second, Any person wishing to enter this contest of word spelling, can do so by sending us 50 cents with their words, for the paper for the year 1901.

Third, any one may enter this contest who is not a subscriber all ready; and any one whose subscription runs out the first of January 1901; and any one whose subscription has run out before that time, by paying at the rate of 4 cents per month of the present year with what ever is due on the year for which they subscribed; that is to say, if any person owes for this year to its close they will need to send one dollar; 50 cents for the present year and 50 cents for 1901, and any person whose year was up in any month of this year and was paid for to that time will need to send at the rate of 4 cents a month for the balance of this year and 50 cents for next year. And any one who has subscribed for the paper at any time during the present year and has not paid for it, can by paying at the rate of 4 cents per month for the number of months they get it this year, and 50 cents for 1901.

If any one subscribed for the paper in July, they need to send 75 cents, 25 for six months of this year, and 50 cents for next year. And any one whose time began in August will need to send 20 cents additional to 50 for next year, and so on for any fraction of this year.

Now this is not a lottery, for every one who enters this contest will get the worth of their money in receiving THE HOME MISSION JOURNAL for whatever time their money pays for it at the rate of 50 cents per year. Be sure that no letters are used in spelling of words that are not found in the words "HOME MISSION JOURNAL," and no letter can be used more times in a word than they are found in "HOME MISSION JOURNAL."

The letters I, N, and S can be used twice in a word, and O, can be used three times if needed. All the other letters can only be used once in a word. THE HOME MISSION JOURNAL is a high class religious paper, designed for baptist families especially; and any others who love good Sunday reading. It has no advertisement, no patient medicine falsehoods, and no politics. It is published twice every month, and gives an account of all the doings of our ministers and churches, and reports all the quarterly meetings and revivals; has a column on health, a children's corner, and articles on temperance, besides a large amount of matter on religious subjects written by men of talent and grace. It is a four page paper of ordinary size, and comes at 50 cents a year.

Now let us have a goodly number of contest-

ants. Those who enter the contest will find a profitable exercise in dictionary words, besides having a chance to secure a prize. Proper names, nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives and possessives can be used. Some years ago there were several publishers of papers in the States that made offers similar to this, and none of them did as they promised, but swindled the people who trusted them out of their money. But we guarantee to do as we agree. The offer will be open until January 1st, 1901.

J. H. HUGHES,
MANAGER OF THE HOME MISSION JOURNAL.

Family Prayer.

A. JUDSON FURMAN

THIS venerable and helpful institution, hallowed with blessed memories, has largely fallen into disuse, to the great detriment of family religion. Parents, church officers and even ministers of the Gospel neglect it. Some, whose calling gives wide scope for observation, claim that scarcely one family in ten among professing Christians, have regular family prayer.

A couple of generations ago almost every Christian home had its family altar; all the members of the household being called together for that purpose. They all expected such a daily service. The sacredness of those hours of domestic worship are often transmitted to us in the grateful reminiscences of aged Christians, not a few of whom were led to the Saviour by that means.

Why has that form of family piety been omitted? Can it be that church members pray less than in olden times? We think not. The environments of Christian life three quarters of a century ago, were very different from those of to-day. Most churches held public worship "once in four weeks." Many considered themselves fortunate if they could hear two sermons a month. In sparsely settled communities public prayer-meetings were impracticable. Such conditions made it incumbent on heads of families to observe family worship in order to maintain the religious life. In our day it is vastly different. With preaching services twice a week, the regular prayer-meeting, Sunday-school and the Young People's meetings, it is very easy for parents to relegate the spiritual culture of the family to these various organizations, even though at a great loss. With family prayer revived till it would become as prevalent as it was at the beginning of the century now closing, we believe the vigor, power and efficiency of vital godliness would be mightily intensified.

Probably more people pray in secret now than formerly; but that does not secure completeness in the Christian graces. Just here lurks a delusion. Many think their prayers (a lazy and heartless way to do, if that is all) and the custom seems to be increasingly prevalent. But such petitioner cannot hope to attain the glorious desideratum that he "pray without ceasing." That eminence in Christian experience is not attained by secret prayer alone. For prayer has its fullest significance as "the expression of the desires of the heart unto God." This "expression" should be made in public worship, or at the family altar, not "to be seen of men," but to supplement the secret breathings of the soul unto Him who will reward them openly. When the suppliant is intensely in earnest with a great want pressing on his soul, he will cry aloud as did the publican. "God be merciful to me a sinner," or with Peter, say, "Lord save, or I perish." It is questionable, therefore, whether silent, secret prayer alone will meet the requirements of an earnest Christian life. We can not safely neglect family prayer.

A very common reason for dispensing with

family prayer is claimed to be lack of time. But that is not a good plea, for that exercise need not occupy more than six or eight minutes in a day. For example: any one can read the 23rd Psalm in fifty seconds and say the Lord's prayer in thirty-five seconds. This brief Psalm and the model prayer can be repeated, deliberately in a minute and a half! Two minutes could be given to the singing of a couple of stanzas of a familiar hymn, which will give zest and enjoyment to all who participate in it all of which can be done regularly every day and not consume more than five minutes in twenty-four hours.

Family worship should as a rule, be brief, especially if children or unconverted youths are present. Long prayers belong to the secret chamber where the soul can hold audience with the Lord as long as faith and importunity can grasp the eternal. The secret of the decadence of family prayer is here suggested, namely, *formal tediousness and listless indifference* on the part of leaders. Reading long chapters and offering long prayers in a spiritless manner will weary lively children, boisterous youth and non-Christians. As people grew older, both laymen and ministers they are apt to become tedious and get out of the current of youthful impulses, which makes the possibility of doing them good, very doubtful unless this danger is carefully guarded. It is wrong to be tedious in our devotions and humiliates as to quench the beginning of piety. Make the services brief, faithful, hopeful: pervaded by the spirit of the Master and the careless, as well as the scoffer, will doubtless yield to its power.

In speaking of children and servants attending domestic services, Rev. Richard Cecil says: "Tediousness will weary them. Fine language will shoot above them. Formality of connection and composition in prayer, they will not comprehend. Gloominess or austerity of devotion will make them think it a hard service. Let them be met with smiles. Let them be met as friends. Let them be met as for the most delightful service in which they can engage. Let them find it short, racy, simple, plain, tender, heavenly."

In every Christian family, the father or the mother as the priest or priestess, should erect a family altar, see that the fires never go out, and that daily incense shall rise to Him who is able to give abundant blessings in return.

The spiritual blessings attendant upon family prayer cannot be numbered. There is a solemnity about it and a reverence for our Heavenly Father that calms the disturbed spirit, lifts the thoughts to God, impresses the heart with a sanctity of thought and of life that will secure divine guidance through the day. That holy calm engendered at the family altar will lighten the burdens of toil, sweeten the service for others and brighten all the duties of life.

A writer of wide observation says: "I never knew a family to become worldly who attended family prayer regularly. I never knew a man to backslide who called his family around him and daily presented them to God. Never till the fire was allowed to die out on that altar has the soul become lukewarm, worldly or skeptical."

Rev. Mr. Merrill tells of a pious father with seven children, who maintained the worship of God in his family till all were grown, but not one was converted. His faith failed in relation to the promise and he resolved to give up family worship and conduct his devotions in secret. However, he determined to have one more prayer with them and give the reason for his course. Taking down the old family Bible from which he had so often read to them the words of life he said, "My children, you know that from your earliest recollection, I have been accustomed to call you around this altar for worship. I have endeavored to instruct you in the way of the Lord. But you have grown up and not one of you converted. You are yet in your sins. I feel discouraged and have concluded to make no further effort for your salvation, to demolish the family altar, to confine my devotions to my closet and thus endeavor to work out my own salvation,