

# Family Worship

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Are family devotions important? Do they have anything to do with the well-being of our families? Are there ways in which we can make our family devotions interesting and relevant to our children? What are your family devotions like?

Why is family worship necessary? We are living in a very wicked world, and according to scripture it is only going to get worse. I believe one reason we need family worship is that the Word has a washing effect on us. Ephesians 5:26 says, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." As we read the Word and discuss its truth, the Holy Spirit will bring its convicting power to our lives and to the lives of our families. As we then respond to the Word, we are washed and cleansed.

We need family worship to teach our children the truths of God's Word. Much of what our children learn about God is learned through our corporate worship services and through personal experience. But nothing can replace a consistent time of family worship. It is one opportunity for us as parents to obey the command in Deuteronomy 6:7, "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Another reason we need family worship is to show our children the importance of the Word. Our children will soon discern how much we value the Bible. If family worship is something easily skipped, we send a clear message to our children that other things are more important than God Himself. How consistent are we when we have company, or when we are away somewhere? As a young boy growing up, I spent many nights at my grandfather's house. One of my greatest memories is every morning, without fail, everyone would gather in the living room for family worship. It didn't matter who was there or what the occasion was; family worship was an imperative. While there are times when we may not have our family devotions for whatever reason, this should be the exception rather than the norm.

One of the greatest reasons for family worship is found in Malachi 4:6, "And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers..." This may be taking this verse out of its context, but one of the effects of the Word is that it turns our hearts to our families. As we discuss the passage we read and talk about its influence on our lives, we gain a window into the hearts of our families. Family worship is an opportunity to discuss the questions our children raise, to talk honestly about the struggles we face, and to give recognition to the grace of God which enables us to live above sin.

How can we make our family worship interesting and relevant for our families? One of the things that can make this a little difficult is that most of us have children at various ages and stages of development. While I believe that the Word must be the most prominent part of our family worship, there are other things that we can do as well. Little children often do not understand what is read from the Bible, and so they enjoy having Bible stories read to them. It is important that we start when they are young because often those first stories are what stick in their minds.

One of the things we have done is read out of the *Martyr's Mirror* once a week. I wasn't sure how our children would respond to that, and I was prepared to hear remarks of how boring it is, etc. To my surprise, our children loved hearing these stories of God's people who lived, suffered, and died for the cause of Christ. If I happened to forget the evening we were to read from the *Martyr's Mirror*, they very faithfully reminded me that tonight is the night. In the land we live in with its easy Christianity, it was a real eye opener for them that Christians must sometimes suffer and die for the Lord Jesus. One of the greatest challenges to us as a family was how these Christians would go to their death rejoicing, knowing that their death was the passage into eternal life, even though they knew they would suffer unspeakable tortures.

There are other things we can do to make our family devotions relevant and interesting. Using a devotional booklet or reading through books of the Bible one chapter at a time can be very interesting. Sometimes demonstrating certain Bible practices can leave a lasting impression. I once heard of a father who, in their discussion of Job, rent his clothes to illustrate the depth of grief Job was suffering. Obviously this would take some planning ahead, but those kinds of events are what our children will remember years later. Family worship is a good time to sing. Some families may not feel that they can sing, but I believe God is pleased with our songs that we sing to Him.

In conclusion, we need family worship because of the cleansing effect the Word has on us, to teach our children God's truth, to show how important the Word is to us, and to turn our hearts toward each other in our families. Fathers, let's be filled with the Word so that we in turn can have something to give to our families when we spend time in family worship.

~Keith Gingerich