

Family Worship

Importance and Biblical Basis...

Many parents rely upon their church to provide a majority of the religious training their children receive. However, exposure to the church once or twice a week will not be sufficient to impress upon children the true value and worth of God to the extent that they are compelled to pursue Him once they leave the home. This is why family worship and moments of family devotion are so important, whether this happens with parents and children, husband and wife, grandparents, or whoever makes up your family.

Family worship practices are evident throughout the Bible. Note, for instance, this important instruction given in Deuteronomy 6:6-7: *And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall talk of them when you sit in the house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.* It's important to remember that only after the Babylonian exile, late in Old Testament history and hundreds of years after Solomon built the temple, did the local synagogues develop and people begin to worship God congregationally on a weekly basis. Before this time, devout men of God such as Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Joseph, and Job would gather with their families to worship God through prayer, praise, and the offering of sacrifices.

Consider the following verse from the Old Testament: *For I (God) have chosen him (Abraham), that he may command His children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord.* (Genesis 18:19, portion)

When would Abraham have done this? He did not have others to rely upon. He could not turn for help and teaching, as we can, to the ministries of a local church. The only way Abraham could have commanded His children to keep the way of the Lord was to first know it himself, and then teach the things of God at home.

Now, consider the following verse from the New Testament: *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.* (Ephesians 6:4)

When and where is this bringing up and instruction to be done? It's of course done when we bring our children to church, and when we converse with them about the things of God from time to time—perhaps at home or in the car. Most of all, this can be done simply through our example. But bringing children up “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” should not happen only during unplanned, unintentional moments throughout the day (although these moments are wonderful!). This type of bringing up and instruction should also happen purposefully and with regularity and structure.

The most important reason to practice family worship is that God *deserves* to be worshipped in our homes by our families. He is (more than) worthy of this.

So, how do we go about family worship?

Elements and Practical Practices...

There are four fundamental elements to family worship: reading, sharing, prayer, and song. Not all four elements would need to be included each time (although they could be), nor would they need to occur in any specific order. The whole point is to find quality time to read God's word, pray, and sing together. This can happen in many ways, and given varying family setups, dynamics, and preferences, should be approached as it makes sense for each family.

Here are some practical thoughts and ideas:

- **Read the Bible together.** Choose books, chapters, or verses that are impactful, and teach the word of God to your children. If the children are younger, you will want to use narrative passages and read shorter sections. As the children get older (or if just husband and wife are reading together), set a goal to read entire books of the Bible. Books like Philippians, for example, are only four chapters long! These books

could be read over a short period. Where applicable, you may find it helpful to read from a children's Bible that is appropriate for the age of your children.

- **Share together.** Share experiences of faith and how you see God working in your life. Discuss what the Bible verses mean to you and ask your children what they think the word of God means and how it can be used in their lives. Talk about the lyrics of a song and what we can learn from them. Consider who you should pray for as a family, and also the concerns each one has themselves that they would like the family to pray for. Show your family what it means to be sorry and remorseful for something you did wrong, and seek forgiveness from one another. Share what you are thankful for and how you will worship God today.
- **Pray together.** The prayer can be offered by the father or mother only, by one of the children, or by each member of the family in turn. This could look different each time, keeping in mind that sometimes Bible reading can inspire prayer (if you go from reading to prayer in your time of family worship). If none of the family members are comfortable praying alone and aloud, then pray the Lord's Prayer together. Pray the Psalms together (many of the psalms are essentially written-out prayers). Read Psalm 23 verbatim, for instance ("The Lord is my shepherd..."). Or, read the Psalm line by line and see how the words of the Psalmist inspire your prayer. Think outside the box. Again, the point is to pray together.
- **Sing together.** Bring hymnals for each family member home from church and sing hymns together. More often than not, when we sing hymns, we sing the Bible. The great classic hymns—those that have stood the test of time—teach us rich, Christ-centered theology. If you have a piano at home and can accompany, wonderful! If not, no worries. Sing without accompaniment. Pick a pitch and go. As we were reminded in our recent *Sing!* small groups, God cares whether and what we sing, but not how well we sing. Of course, we're not limited to hymns. Modern worship songs can also be sung, and often connect our children and youth (and adults!) with the Lord in special and significant ways. Go to YouTube or Spotify, search for your favorite hymn or modern worship song (even better...both!), and sing along with the recording as a family. Get creative! Find ways to praise the Lord together in song.

Again, not all four elements need to be included each time a family worships together in the home, nor does this time need to be extensive. A good average time would be 10-15 minutes. *When* family worship happens during the day could also vary from day to day, or from week to week. One day it may work best in the morning (before everyone goes their separate ways), while another day it may work best in the evening, either before or after dinner, or before everyone goes to sleep. Saturday evening is a particularly appropriate time to gather in worship; once the day's activities are completed, as a family, you can focus your attention to Sunday.

That family worship happens is more important than *how* family worship happens. The point is that we find ways to worship Him at home and with our families. May we continue to value our time spent with the Lord daily, and may we be compelled to seek His presence and give Him glory in the circle of our families.

Here are some resources that you can order if you need something to get you started:

- People in the Bible Conversation Cards - <https://www.shopshereadstruth.com/collections/kids-read-truth/products/people-in-the-bible-conversation-cards-old-testament-kids-read-truth?variant=20276995260478>
- I Will Worship You Journal - <https://www.shopshereadstruth.com/collections/kids-read-truth/products/i-will-worship-you-scripture-art-journal-kids-read-truth?variant=20078346764350>
- The Lord's Prayer Interactive Card Set - <https://www.shopshereadstruth.com/collections/kids-read-truth/products/the-lords-prayer-interactive-card-set?variant=41297805776>