



“I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment” (Genesis 18:19).

### **Family Worship**

**Central Truth:** Daily worship in the home strengthens family ties.

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**Topic:** Family; Worship.

We hear a great deal about the separation of church and state, and we all agree that the state should not officially support one denomination of Christianity and oppress the others (which is what the original framers of the Constitution meant). That would result in the loss of religious freedom and the depravity of the denomination which was supported by the state.

But there is a tragic loss when there is a separation of the church and home. They mutually support one another; each is essential to the other's welfare. There can be no strong church without her members coming from strong homes. There can be no strong home without the influence of Christ and His church therein.

Daily worship in the home is a key to having a stable marriage and religiously devoted children. In fact, daily worship strengthens family ties. The home is the basic institution for religious training. The church supplements and reinforces the instruction received in the home. They are companions.

### **There Is a Bible Basis for Family Worship**

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 states very clearly God's command for each family to worship Him in each home. It begins with the devotion of the parents toward God (verses 4, 5). It requires a personal knowledge of the Word of God in the parents' hearts (verse 6). It is practiced by parental instruction of

the children in the things of God (verse 7). It is effective when God's Word governs all of life's activities. It should govern the conversation in the home and abroad, morning and evening (verse 7); govern what the hands do and the eyes see (verse 8); and it should control what enters and leaves the home (verse 9). The Word of God is to govern all aspects of family life.

Each generation is responsible for passing on to the next generation *"the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done"* (Psalm 78:4). As the works of God are told over and again, a fourfold blessing will follow. (1) The next generation will be a people of faith who *"set their hope in God"* (Psalm 78:7). (2) They will *"not forget the works of God"* (Psalm 78:7). (3) They will *"keep his commandments"* (Psalm 78:7). (4) They will not be *"a stubborn and rebellious generation that set not their heart aright"* (Psalm 78:8). Is that what you want for your children and grandchildren? Then observe family worship and Bible instruction in your home now.

The Passover is a demonstration of worship in the home. It was the most solemn ceremony in ancient Israel (Exodus 12:1-51). And it was observed totally in the home. None of its observance was away from the family homestead. Think of that! God ordained it for a perpetual memorial to be celebrated always in the home.

Christians in the New Testament practiced worship in their homes. They had prayer meetings in their homes (Acts 12:12). They observed the church ordinances in their homes (Acts 2:47, 48; 10:48; 16:32-34). They had a church in private homes where their worship was observed (Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15). Is there a *"church in thy house"* (Philemon 2)? Your home should be a holy place where each member lives in the presence of God.

## **There Is a Practical Need for Family Worship**

**The depravity of our hearts requires worship in the home.** Jeremiah lamented, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it"* (Jeremiah 17:9)? Jeremiah added that no person is able to direct his life aright apart from the help of God (Jeremiah 10:23). We know that by personal experience. That is why we need to meet God each day, and our homes are the best places to do it.

**The nature of the Scriptures encourages worship in the home.** Psalm 119 teaches that the Scriptures will keep you from sin (verses 29, 36, 128, 133) and promote Christian virtues (verses 50, 98, 105, 114, and others). The best defense against the evils of our day is a family life saturated with the Word of God received in family worship each day.

**The spiritual warfare demands daily worship.** *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”* (Ephesians 6:12). Our lives must be fortified with ability beyond ourselves. *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds”* (II Corinthians 10:4). One day a week in church will not fully enable us for such a fight.

**The parents' responsibility to the children bids them to lead in daily worship in the home.** Each week a typical child will spend 1 percent of his time in church, 16 percent of his time in school, and 83 percent of his time in the home. Where will he receive the greatest influence? The spiritual failure of many children reflects the spiritual failure of their parents in their homes. The goal of parents is to rear their child *“in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4).

### **There Are Practical Guidelines for Family Worship**

**Give time for preparation to meet God.** Do not rush from the dinner table (or the secular television program) to grab your Bible and read a passage. Take a little time to prepare to meet God. Gather your materials (Bible, devotional guide, prayer list). Clean the place where you meet with God. Also, send the children to the bathroom and give them a drink of water before beginning. A few minutes of calm preparation before family devotions will greatly strengthen your meeting with God.

**Give time to the Word of God.** Make sure every family member has a Bible, even the children who are too young to read. Read the Bible itself, even if you use a devotional book (or a book of Bible stories if you have very young children). You may have different family members read from different versions of the Bible, if you wish, but read the Word. When you have read, talk about it. A full lecture of a Bible lesson or devotional is not necessary. Just talk about what the text means. Apply that meaning to your life. (But do not use the family worship as a time to rebuke a child for misbehavior during the day.) Make Bible reading interesting to every member of the family. Someone has suggested this approach to the Bible: “Read it through; think it over; pray it in; work it out; pass it on.”

**Give time to pray to God.** One person may pray for the whole family; or, each one may pray about whatever is of personal interest. Or, each may pray one sentence on one subject as they go around the family circle (more times than one, if they wish). The use of a prayer list is very helpful to remember all the petitions and to record answers to prayer in order to praise

God for them. Be careful about using long theological words, especially if you have children in your home. Pray as if you were carrying on a conversation with a Father who loves you. You are!

**Give time to praise God.** If you are a singing family, sing. Testify about what God has done in your life that day. Smile at the appropriate times and rejoice before the Lord. Parents, do not rebuke or censure a family member at this time. Discipline all through the day, as is necessary, but not when you have come before the Lord to rejoice in His presence. God inhabits the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3). He will manifest His presence in your home as you praise Him.

### **There Are Blessings From Family Worship**

**God is personally present when your family gathers before Him.** His presence is not limited to a great number of people. He is present when even two or three are gathered in His name (Matthew 18:20). He is present when His people gather in a private home, as well as He is in a house of worship. He is present when your family gathers around His Word to fellowship with Him.

**God will answer your prayers.** Matthew 18:19 says if two or three agree to ask God for one thing, it will be given them. The two or three (or more) in your family could agree and ask.

**God will meet your needs.** You can ask and receive, seek and find, knock and see the door opened (Matthew 7:7-11). God is a Father who delights to give good things to His children who ask Him.

**Your influence will be enlarged.** God says, *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). Spiritual things made real to a child in the home and in church will remain with him for the rest of his life. The promises God has made to you are made also to your children (Acts 2:39). You can experience the salvation of all the members of your household as did the jailer in Philippi (Acts 16:30-34). Your home can become a colony of heaven on earth. Even the neighbors will become aware of your family time (without your mentioning it), and your Christian influence will be stronger than before. Do not forget that God will use your home as a signal station to your acquaintances.

### **There Are Problems to Be Encountered in Family Worship**

**When can all the family get together?** In today's fragmented society, that might be a major problem. Gather the family in council, set a time, and

stick to it.

**What about an uncooperative member of the family?** Invite the adults and require the children to participate. But do not make family devotions a point of argument by your insistence.

**What about interruptions during devotions?** Take small children to the bathroom and give them a drink before beginning. Appoint one person to respond to the telephone or the doorbell, and continue with your devotions as that person handles interruptions.

**What about it growing stale with time?** Continue with it, even so. Consider it an appointment with God. Ask Him to help. Plan to make the family worship as interesting as you can. Vary the place you meet (from bedroom to living room to yard). Change the procedure you follow (do not permit the same person to do the same thing at the same time and in the same way every time). Vary the person who leads it. (Even a child can lead it with your supervision.) But continue it because you need it and because God delights in it.

Make a “*church in thy house*” by meeting with God regularly with all your family. The father should lead, but the mother must if he will not. You need to pray. Your home needs praying members. Your church needs a praying congregation. Your neighbor needs a praying neighbor. Your country needs praying citizens. “*God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you*” (1 Samuel 12:23).

## Questions for Discussion

1. Why does God command us to have daily worship in our homes?
2. How does Psalm 78:1-8 show the value of it?
3. How did Christians in the New Testament practice it?
4. How should you prepare to have family worship?
5. How can you magnify the Bible in family worship?
6. What blessings does Matthew 18:19, 20 promise?
7. How can you deal with an uncooperative family member?
8. How can you keep family worship fresh and interesting?
9. How does 1 Samuel 12:23 teach us to pray for one another?
10. How can you put this study into effect in your home?