



"O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together" (Psalm 34:3).

Family Worship

Lesson Subject: The family should engage in regular periods of worship together.

L47. Date: July 1982. **Text:** Deuteronomy 6:4-12. **Topic:** Family; Worship.

"The family that prays together stays together." That statement underscores the importance of recognizing God and meeting Him as a family unit. It makes a difference when Dad, Mom, and all the children gather together in the home and worship God. That will be the most influential thing a person can do to bless his home and family.

Separation of church and state may be right, but the separation of church and home is a tragic wrong.

This lesson deals with family worship. The family can and should worship in the public meetings of the church, of course, but that is not enough. There need to be times in the home when the family gathers before God and worships Him as a family unit. Children will be influenced for life by those times when they met God in the home with their parents.

The lesson comments which follow are built upon the command of God recorded in the lesson text (Deuteronomy 6:4-12). No attempt is made to give a verse by verse interpretation of the passage in these comments, but all that is said below is based upon the passage. Read and reread it carefully before you continue reading these comments.

I. BIBLE BASIS FOR FAMILY WORSHIP

A. God commands parents to worship in the home with their

children (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). He commands them to "love, teach, talk, bind, and write" the words of God. And all of that is to be done in the home. God is to be recognized at all times and under every circumstance of the family. His Word is to be a part of daily conversation, and events of life are to be interpreted in the light of it. That is God's description of a spiritual household. To fail to follow those standards is to disobey the clear command of God.

B. We need to worship with our families in our homes. Psalm 78:1-8 shows that is the way the influence of the Word of God is passed from generation to generation. Our fathers told us of God. We will tell our children. *"That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments"* (Psalm 78:6, 7).

That blessed privilege and solemn responsibility must not be passed on to the church or school. Parents are the responsible ones before God. They must keep God in the minds of their children all through the week between the meetings of the church. We are but one generation away from ignorance of God, for each generation must be taught anew.

C. The Bible demonstrates the importance of worship in the home. One of the most sacred of all Jewish observances, the Passover, was celebrated in the home (Exodus 12:1-51). It was celebrated totally in the home, with no reference to the place of public worship. God met His people there and protected them from death on that fateful night in Egypt. He still meets His people in protection and blessing when they invite Him into their family gatherings and worship Him.

D. The early Christians practiced worship in the home. There were no church buildings for the first Christians. The home was their regular place of worship. *"The church in thy house"* became a common phrase in New Testament writings (Romans 16:5; I Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2).

Even the church ordinances were observed by the little congregations assembled in private homes (Acts 2:42, 46; 10:48; 16:32-34). Prayer meetings were held in private homes (Acts 12:12).

Thank God for church buildings where Christians meet to worship God in public assembly. But if that is the only time a person meets God, he is cold and backslidden in heart. Let the family meet God daily in the household. What a blessing!

II. HUMAN NEED FOR FAMILY WORSHIP

A. Our depraved hearts need the influence of Holy Scripture.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). *"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jeremiah 10:23). How we need the help of the Word of God!

Look what the Word does. *"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether"* (Psalm 19:7-9). Everyone needs that ministry of the Word of God in his heart. Family worship makes it possible.

B. The spiritual warfare we face makes family worship imperative. There are *"fleshly lusts which war against the soul"* (I Peter 2:11). They must be subdued. Wars and fightings arise within as a result of *"your lusts that war in your members"* (James 4:1). *"For 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).

What hope is there? There is hope in the God of the Bible. *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds)"* (II Corinthians 10:3, 4). It is important that every member of the family be fortified in that spiritual battle, being "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Ephesians 6:10). Family worship will help make every member strong.

C. The parent's responsibility for the children demands family worship in the home. The church can supplement, but it cannot substitute for home teaching. A child spends 25 hours per week in public school, 1 hour per week in Sunday School, and 142 hours per week in the home. Which will have the best and greatest influence on the child?

God holds the parents responsible, not the Sunday School teacher or the pastor. The parents are responsible! They need to take advantage of every aid there is available to nurture their children in the things of God. There would be no greater heritage a parent could leave his child than to pass on a sense of reverence for God and respect for the Bible. That is more important than any amount of financial estate. And every parent can do that. Worshiping together as a family is part of the heritage one can leave.

The Word of God has a power beyond our imagination to influence and direct our lives. It should be planted in the hearts of our children by daily and reverent exposure to it.

III. PRACTICAL METHOD FOR FAMILY WORSHIP

"What should I do in family worship time?" That is one of the most disturbing problems to many. Consider the following practical suggestions.

A. Prepare yourself in advance to meet God with your family. Fill your mind with thoughts of God and His goodness (Philippians 4:8). Family worship is not time to criticize, rebuke, or censure one another for misdeeds of the day.

B. Prepare your material in advance to meet God with your family. You will need a Bible for each member of the family, even the child who cannot read. It is important to let them know that we meet God in His written Word. Have songbooks at hand if you sing in your worship time. Plan in advance what you are going to do, with no last-minute interruptions.

C. Include many expressions of worship as you meet God with your family. Read the Bible together. (The method could be changed with one doing all the reading one time, reading verse-by-verse or paragraph-by-paragraph at another time, etc.) Discuss what the passage says, listening to the children's ideas. Have a time of prayer. (Again, the method can change with one leading the prayer, sentence prayers around the circle, each one writing down the one most important thing he would say to God, then sharing it with the family before silent prayer, etc.) Testify to what God has done in your life during the day. Sing together, if you are a singing family. Rejoice in the presence of your God!

You will meet God in your home the same as you will commune with Him in any other place. Have family worship!

IV. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN FAMILY WORSHIP

Because of the power in meeting God with your family, the devil will oppose it with all his might. You can meet and deal successfully with the problems he raises against you.

A. There may be a problem of a time when all the family can get

together. But such a time can be found for your family. Get together and settle on a time. Then protect that time. Make it a priority. Change your schedule of work or play, if necessary, in order to have family worship.

B. There may be a problem of an uncooperative member of the family. The children must be required to attend, just as you require them to get up in the mornings when they had rather sleep. The adult can be encouraged. But do not make it a "fuss item" if some adult is disinterested. Go ahead with the worship period, inviting that member to attend. Ask God to help.

C. There may be interruptions during your devotional times. The telephone and the doorbell are often problems. Assign one member to answer such interruptions while the rest of the family continues. Let the response to the telephone be, "We are engaged in family worship just now. Could you call back in half an hour, please?" That will be a witness for Christ. The small children should be given a drink, taken to the bathroom, etc., before worship begins. Then they can sit through the period.

D. There may be a problem of disinterest because it is the same procedure every time. Vary the place of meeting, the person who leads the devotional time, the procedure you follow (reading, praying, singing, testifying, etc.). A family worship time out under the stars might be a special inspiration!

Keep up the practice of meeting God with your family. Do it because you need it, not just because you want it. When the "winds of inspiration" are blowing, raise the sail of faith and travel before them. When they are calm, take out the oars of the will and row with all your might. There can be a kind of "church in thy house" when you meet God regularly with all the family. The father should lead, but if he does not the mother must.

You need it. Your children need it. Your family members need it. Your church needs it. Your nation needs it.

Let your commitment be to every member of your family, "*God forbid that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray . . .*" (I Samuel 12:23).

QUESTIONS

1. How does family worship help obey Deuteronomy 6:5?
2. What personal discipline is required in Deuteronomy 6:6?
3. Who is responsible to obey Deuteronomy 6:7, 8?
4. How does family worship answer all those commands?
5. Why do we need to meet God as a family unit?

6. What influence does the Word of God have according to Psalm 19:7-9?
7. What should one do in a family worship period?
8. What problems do you encounter in family worship?
9. How can those problems be solved?
10. Will you commit yourself to meet God with your family each day, beginning today?