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# FAMILY WORSHIP 101

*FAMILY WORSHIP IS THE REGULAR USE OF SCRIPTURE, SONG, AND PRAYER BY A FAMILY UNIT, GUIDED BY THE HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLD. LEARNING HOW TO UNDERSTAND, DEFEND, AND IMPROVE FAMILY WORSHIP CAN BRING GREAT BENEFITS TO YOU TIME TOGETHER.*

# Understanding Family Worship.

Family worship is the regular use of Scripture, song, and prayer by a family unit, guided by the head of the household.

## *FAMILY WORSHIP IS REGULAR*

As illustrated by the practice of the early church, weekly congregational worship is insufficient for families that have been touched by God's grace (Acts 2:47; 5:42). Scripture exhorts us to worship God daily, giving glory to Him in all things (Ps. 92:2; 1 Cor. 10:31).

## *FAMILY WORSHIP IS COVENANTAL*

Before God established worship in the tabernacle, his people worshiped in family tents. "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous..." (Ps. 118:15). Job's piety shines in his prayers for his children (Job. 1:5). The faith of young Timothy blossomed in the fertile soil of family worship (2 Tim. 1:5). Christians must spend time alone with God in their prayer closets (Matt. 6:6). But they should also worship together with their families through the use of Scripture, song, and prayer.

## *FAMILY WORSHIP IS WORSHIP*

Family worship is not merely a religious discipline; it is a meeting with the triune God in a spirit of adoration by means of three key ingredients.



Families worship through Scripture. When we read the Bible, God preaches about Himself and the indescribable gift of His dear Son to a needy world. This message is not just for information, but also for exaltation.



Families worship through singing. It is inescapable: God's people sing! The 150 psalms reference singing around 150 times. The New Testament call to admonish one another through song applies well in the context of the home (Col. 3:16).exaltation.



Families worship through prayer. Since prayer is the chief way in which we show thankfulness to God (see the Heidelberg Catechism, question 116), our prayers must be worshipful, not merely formal. Family prayers should reflect the pastoral ethos and pathos of our High Priest (John 17).

# Defending Family Worship.

Scripture requires family worship and yields spiritual growth for both old and young.

## *SCRIPTURE REQUIRES FAMILY WORSHIP*

Specifically, God requires heads of households, like good shepherds, to lead their families into green pastures (Josh. 24:15). God expected Abraham to “command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD” (Gen. 18:19). Consider also the example of Cornelius, “a devout man...who feared God with all his household” (Acts. 10:1). It is no surprise that when Peter came to Caesarea to preach the gospel, Cornelius rallied his household to attendance. “We are all present before God,” he said, “to hear all the things commanded you by God” (v. 33).

## *FAMILY WORSHIP YIELDS SPIRITUAL GROWTH*

Family worship is an indispensable instrument for instilling both old and young with a consciousness of the Lord, His Word, and our call to worship. In his research for one of his books, George Barna demonstrates that parents who pass along to their children the baton of spiritual maturity and vitality have one thing in common: they “take God’s words on life and family at face value, and apply those words faithfully and consistently.” Missionary John Paton relates the indelible impact family worship left on his life: “When, on his knees and all of us kneeling around him in Family Worship, [our father] poured out his whole soul with tears...for every...need, we all felt as if in the presence of the living Saviour, and learned to know and love Him as our Divine Friend.”

Children notice when worship is only a once-a-week activity. God often works powerfully in young lives whose souls are warmed by the incubator of daily family worship.

# Improving Family Worship.

Many families are convinced by the need for family worship, but struggle in implementation. In such cases, what can be done?

## *SELECT A TIME THAT WORKS*

Unless worship is codified in a family's schedule it will likely be supplanted by life's busyness. Some families will flourish with morning worship; others will better meet in the evening. Families that can find no time in their week for worship need to adjust their schedule.

## *STUDY FAMILY WORSHIP TOGETHER*

Some time ago, our family spent a month carefully reading and discussing Joel Beeke's booklet Family Worship. Partly due to the dynamic of learning together, this study made a lasting impression on us.

## *STICK TO A PLAN*

Haphazard Scripture reading rarely edifies over the long haul. Families should include variety in their plans and adjust them over time. But following a regular Scripture reading plan helps us read the Bible the way it was meant to be read: as a cohesive history of God's redemptive work.

## *SING!*

For some Christians the thought of introducing song into family worship seems unrealistic. In order to establish a fresh tradition of family singing, begin with what you know. Start with familiar songs and progress to less-familiar songs with the help of tools. (e.g. [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org)).

## *STRIVE FOR REGULARITY, NOT PERFECTION*

Most of us have become frustrated when our family worship ideals eclipsed reality. Family worship is like a great friendship. It has its bumps, but it is forged through regular, meaningful interaction. William Gouge observed that "a nail that at one blow barely enters, with many blows is knocked all the way in." So it is with repetition in family worship. Through the gospel, Jesus enters our lives and our families. Where He has entered, He is to be worshiped. Where He is worshiped, we trust He will stay and live and work and bless.

