

Family Worship — Its Need, Structure, and Defense.

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I want to provide a simple defense for family worship and show why it is needed so desperately in our world today. I also want to give a simple way to structure family worship so that it does not become dull, boring, rote, or legalistic.

I. THE NEED for Family Worship

The family unit in our world is confused, conflicted, and outright rebellious against the ordained establishment of God in the Garden of Eden (Gen 1-2). Because our world has muddied the waters regarding what the family is and how a family is to function properly, family worship is needed. The call for family worship also comes from the reality that most families that go to church in our modern world do not practice family worship — nor have they any idea what it is or why it is necessary. The need for family worship exists because godly families that are structured biblically, centered on Christ's glory, and oft-meditating on the glorious gospel are few and far between. This is, sadly, true even amongst families in the evangelical world.

II. THE DEFENSE for Family Worship

The Word of God reveals that the man (=husband) is the head of the home. He is the authority. He is the one responsible for the spiritual well-being of his entire family — wife and children. He must shepherd them, guide them, nurture them, protect them, feed them, care for them, intercede for them, minister to them, pray for them, and rebuke them. And all of these occasions can occur in no greater setting than the regular discipline of family worship. In Deut 4.10, Moses tells the congregation of Israel that they should teach their children all that God has done so that they may learn to fear Him all their days. Paul declares that it is the duty of the father to train up his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Parents are to teach and instill God's words diligently to their children at all times — when they sit, walk, lie down and rise up. The training of the children — and of the entire family — in the knowledge of the Word of God is an ever-existing discipline that should be regularly occurring in the life and culture of the family.

III. THE STRUCTURE of Family Worship

To keep things simple, fresh, and repeatable, the following elements should regularly be a part of family worship:

1) Singing the Word of God

Family worship should include an element of singing good, theologically rich and biblically accurate music. Many of the old hymns are memorable and easy for children to internalize. The theology of the lyrics of many of the hymns passed down through the centuries is too precious to neglect passing on to our children. Whether it is one single verse of a hymn or multiple

hymns per night (depending on time availability and the ages of children), the singing of good hymns should be included in family worship.

2) Reading the Word of God

An obvious part of family worship must contain the reading of the Scriptures. It is the Word of God that is living and active. It is God's Word that can shatter stone and break the hard heart. Children are rebellious sinners and they need to be evangelized until they repent of sins and believe in Christ and evidence true conversion by showing the fruit of the Spirit. What better way to evangelize your children than to read from the most powerful instrument on the planet! And, at that, it is the *only* instrument that the Spirit uses to convert sinners. Whether it is reading a chapter each night, or a paragraph each night or meditating on an individual verse, the vocal, clear, bold, verbal reading of the Word of God must be central to the family worship time.

3) Praying as a Family

Praying is coming into the presence of the Sovereign and communicating with Him in delightful obeisance. What better way for fathers to bring his family before the throne of Almighty God than for the family to pray together each evening during family worship. He can intercede for his family and present them before the throne of grace. And he can teach his children how to pray by modeling it for them. Different prayers of adoration, worship, thanksgiving, confession, repentance, reconciliation, supplication, and intercession can all be offered during times of family worship.

4) Catechism with the Family

A helpful mode of instruction that many in history have utilized is that of catechizing. A catechism is a teaching by means of a question and answer format. There are simple catechisms that teach solid, theological doctrine that a father can implement and incorporate into his family worship times. Whether it is one question per night or one question per week, this proves to be an extremely effective way of concisely and coherently instilling biblical truth into the minds and hearts of each family member. This provides for great discussion opportunities on various theological issues. The father cannot excuse himself for not leading in family worship because he does not know theology because now the catechism aids him in instructing his family in the truth of the Word and in the ways of the Lord.

As far as some pedantic questions regarding the duration of family worship, how many family members should pray, and what to do with the smaller children (infant/toddler) during family worship, I want to provide to set demand. The time or location is not the most important element. The point is that family worship be done at some place and at the most convenient time when all the family members can be present. If smaller children can learn to sit still during family worship (of increasing duration over time) this can only serve to help prepare him/her to sit still during the weekly corporate worship services in the local Church. In sum, family worship is a vehicle whereby the Word of God can practically have its central place in the daily life and culture of the Christian household.