

Family Worship & Leadership

Geoffrey R. Kirkland

Christ Fellowship Bible Church

In God's glorious wisdom, He brings a man and a woman together in the lifelong covenant of marriage and they are together to grow in Christ, in their love for one another, and in their instructing, disciplining and discipling of the children. But, biblically, God ordains that the head of the house – the husband – is the primary instructor of the families. He is the one that God will hold accountable for the spiritual well-being of the family (wife and children included).

Family Worship encourages male leadership, evidences the glory of complementarianism¹, and provides regular opportunities for the husband to faithfully shepherd, humbly instruct, and biblically teach his family the Word of God.

1. Family Worship Provides an Opportunity for the Husband/Father to Lead His Family in the Word of God.

The biblical duty and the blessed responsibility of leading a family in the Word of God begins with the marriage relationship and God has so chosen for the men to lead in this regard by washing his wife in the Word (Eph 5.26). The man of God must lead his family by guiding them into the truth of Scripture regularly. The burden of the instruction of children primarily falls to fathers (Eph 6.4). The book of Proverbs models this how the father instructs his son in the ways of wisdom so he can have skill for living (cf. Prov 1.8; 6.20).

2. Family Worship Encourages the Man to Study, Prepare, & Pray for the Time of Worship So That God Will Mightily Work.

As a father is the one that God delegates to hold primary responsibility for the spiritual health of the home, he senses the gravity of this calling and is then compelled to fervently pray for God to work through the family worship times. The husband prays for his wife to be encouraged in the Word. He begs God to work mightily in the grace of regenerating the children. The man also knows that he should study and prepare ahead of time so that he knows what to read in God's Word and what he will say when the family is gathered together. This models exemplary spiritual leadership in the home so that the wife and the children all see dad preparing for the climactic event of the day – when God talks to families through His Word in a time of worship, praise, & celebration.

3. Family Worship humbles the Leader of the Home Because He Often Will See His Own Inadequacy and Shortcomings.

The more the husband sees God's calling upon him that he has to lead, shepherd, wash, and teach his wife in the Word, he will repeatedly be humbled because he will see his own sins, failings, shortcomings, and inadequacies. Much more, he will realize his utter helplessness to save, sanctify, and perfectly instruct his children in the Word of God as he ought. But this is where he humbly cries out to God for daily grace, for rescuing mercy, for enabling strength, and for joyful endurance. And by the help of the Lord and with the power of the Spirit, the man can lead his home – even while still imperfect! – to the glory of God and for the blessing of his home.

¹ **Complementarianism** holds that God has created men and women equal in their essential dignity and human personhood, but different and complementary in function with male headship in the home and in the Church.

4. Family Worship Is an Occasion Where the Husband Can Wash His Wife in the Word of God.

God has ordained that the gospel be illustrated through the marriage relationship. Christ's work for His bride, His people, His elect is pictured in the husband's work in sacrificially loving, selflessly serving, gently tending, faithfully caring for, and fearlessly protecting his wife. And the submission of the church to her Christ is wonderfully illustrated by the wife's selflessly reverent, submissive, tender, and respectful role in completing her husband as a companion, a helpmate, a suitable helper. And in this marriage covenant between a man and a woman, God has ordained that the husband should be the primary spiritual teacher of his wife (1 Cor 14.35). One such occasion where the husband can wash his wife (Eph 5.26) in the Word of God is the regular times of family worship. The consistent reading of Scripture, the daily praying together, the regular singing of hymns, and the dialoguing on Scripture and theology provides a wonderful setting for a husband to teach, instruct, and shepherd his wife in her spiritual walk with Christ.

5. Family Worship Presents a Setting to Instruct the Children in the Works, Ways, & Word of God.

Psalm 34.11 speaks of parents telling children to listen as the parents teach how to fear the LORD. The Bible is the most complete, important, exhaustive, and inspired book that reveals who God is and what God has done. It shows what God requires and how far all men fall short. It provides the only solution to man's problem and the subsequent life that a man of God will have in pursuing Him. For the husband to see his role rightly in leading his family in teaching the works, ways, and Word of God, he will look for opportunities to regularly instruct the children in who God is. This is what Moses prescribed for the Israelite fathers (Deut 6.4-9).

6. Family Worship Models for Everyone Present (Children, Wife, & Visitors) that God Has Ordained the Family Unit and the Spiritual Life within the Family Culture to be Led by the Husband/Father.

Living in a culture that loudly boasts of moral relativism, the world in which we live has called good evil and evil good. God ordained the family unit to be led by the man who faithfully loves and cares for his wife and as they together teach, discipline, instruct, and disciple the children. The primary responsibility, however, is upon the husband. In a world of such twisted confusion, when family worship is led by the leader of the home (=the husband), it serves as a frequent reminder to everyone present that God has ordained the family unit to be led in terms of male headship. And as the man serves his family, it will picture the gospel of Christ consistently to the children so they will see the husband loving, serving, leading, caring, interceding, praying for, weeping with, rejoicing over, and instructing others in the home – a wonderful illustration of Jesus Christ! And when a visitor joins a family for worship, they will see the husband leading the devotional time and this will provide opportunities to talk about the spiritual life within the family and how the man of God leads the family of God. It shows the children even from the youngest of years that dad is the head. He is the leader. He is the one to whom God has given authority in the home. Thus, when they grow up and get married, they will have had a godly example of a home life faithfully modeling what the Scriptures teach (rather than being swayed by the corrupted examples of home-life in the broken, authoritative, selfishly motivated contexts that generally describes our culture). May God continue to raise up our husbands and fathers to take up and fulfill the God-ordained responsibility bestowed upon them to lead, shepherd, instruct, and care for the spiritual well-being of the families all by daily depending on the sufficient, empowering, free-given strength of God's Spirit.