

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR FAMILY WORSHIP

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I love family worship. I readily and humbly admit that I have much learning still to do. But by God's grace, I heard a sermon while sitting in a dorm room in Pennsylvania for my doctoral studies that the Lord used to expose my sin of neglecting my family in the regular shepherding of their souls in the Word of God. So I'm no professional. But I am a man who has seen, experienced, and savored the happy joys and spiritual benefits of family worship. In this brief write-up, *I hope to provide some practical tips and helpful reminders for family worship.*

1) Leadership.

This simply serves as the clarion call for men to lead. God has declared in Ephesians 5 that the husbands *are* the heads over their wives. God doesn't ask men to lead. He says you *are* a leader. So, then, by God's grace and with God's Word, and with Christ's joy, *lead your family* and shepherd them diligently! The way Christ loves you, and ministers to you, and prays for you, and resides with you, so you should do similarly to your family under your care. Nothing is more important than your leading your family, dear men of God. If you neglect anything, don't let it be the spiritual leading and faithful nurturing of your family [wife & children] toward Christ, His gospel, and His excellencies.

2) Frequency.

Enjoy family worship frequently. This does not mean a family must gather for hours at a time but rather it supports the notion of meeting together more frequently to build and cultivate this spiritual discipline. Quality is better than quantity. Keep it regular. Keep it frequent. Keep it engaging. Keep it brief. Better to lead your family to the throne of grace for 10 minutes a day every day a week than to do it two times a month for an hour each! Do it regularly!

3) Intentionality.

Intentionally pastor your family. Every man of God, by God's directive and by His grace, serves his family as the *pastor-in-residence*. So, intercede for them in fervent and regular prayer. Minister to their souls as you instruct them in the Word and answer questions they may have (age appropriate). Engage their minds and teach on worship as you sing with your family the rich, theological, and awesome hymns that have been penned through the centuries. Switch up the order. Vary it at times with adding a catechism question, read a biography and keep it fresh and exciting. But you, O men, can lead intentionally and engage even the youngest of children and even to your teens by God's grace.

4) Variety.

I do think a compelling case can be made for families to pray, sing, and read the Word together. But don't always and ever do the same thing, the same way. That will surely bore your family and teach them that family worship is dull and lifeless. Ask the children -- even the young ones, if possible -- to read the Scripture. Have everyone pray. Pray for the family, for the lost, for missionaries, for the persecuted, for the neighbors, for the church members and shepherds. Thank God, confess sin to God, petition God, confess sin to one another. Sing hymns. Grab a good hymn and make it a hymn of the month (or a hymn of the week). And when you have other guests over for a meal, let them join you for family worship (even if they are unsaved!). Keep it exciting, fresh, Christ-centered and gospel-focused!

5) Instruction.

Family worship never becomes a merit by which we become more acceptable to God, or keep ourselves saved, or by which we can look down on others who may not engage in family worship. Rather, family worship is a God-appointed way for fathers to instruct their children in the ways of God, the Word of God, and the wisdom of God. God's Word *must* be passed on to the next generation. O the tragedy of children that rise up without parents that say: "come, you children, listen to me and I will teach you the fear of the LORD" (Ps 34:11). This requires, then, that fathers need to be students of the Word so that we can shepherd well and instruct accurately in the truths of Scripture. So it may require a bit more time to study (especially if the children or your wife asks a question that you don't know the answer to) and a bit more time of desperate prayer. But how glorious for God to conform you to Christ as you lead humbly and lead obediently and lead joyfully in this way! Instruct the souls in their sin, in God's holiness, and in Christ's sufficient atonement. Instruct them of the need to repent of their sin and to trust in Christ alone!

6) Patience. (long term focus)

And one more very important element. Fathers, be patient. Children are like trees. An acorn does not grow into a mighty oak tree overnight. That occurs over many years. Don't expect children to become spiritual giants by tomorrow. Remember the long-term focus. We earnestly desire to obey Christ and to shepherd the family well in the Word. But don't become so near-sighted that you grow discouraged when you don't see fruit right away. Indeed, even when family worship appears to be a disaster (yes, I've had many of those nights) for sin reasons, rowdy children, crying babies, illness, interruptions, etc., keep enduring. Don't grow weary and give up! Don't throw in the towel. Like the physical growth of your children, spiritual growth *does* happen: slowly, over time, and often it's not even that noticeable to the eye. So be patient, be persistent, be prayerful, be a model, and pastor them toward Christ!