

## *Family Worship*

Part 7 3/25/2020

Many of us have much more time available to prioritize during this time of social separation and isolation. And if you don't, if you are more busy than usual, then you have all the more need to prioritize your time. Whether you have more time or less, make sure you are using it wisely.

One way to consider your priorities is through considering and implementing the spiritual disciplines in your life. We will cover some of these over the next few days, but I want to encourage you today to bring your family together for a time of worship. By "family" I mean parents and kids. If you have no kids, or are empty-nesters, then I mean husband and wife. Historically we have referred to this time as *family worship*, but sometimes this has been misunderstood in ways that have caused its demise in some circles. So, first, let's define what I *don't* mean.

First, I am not encouraging you to duplicate what your family does in corporate worship. There are elements of corporate worship that should only be practiced when the body gathers together. Baptizing, sharing the Lord's supper, and preaching are elements of corporate worship that should not be practiced by individuals or families. This does not mean it is wrong to listen to preaching unless you are gathered in corporate worship. The technology God has blessed us with today allows for unprecedented access to good preaching and we should utilize this blessing for our spiritual growth. (Now there is plenty of bad preaching available out there as well, but for your spiritual health you should isolate yourself from bad preaching in the same way as you isolate yourself from the coronavirus for your physical health!) But preaching has its origin within the gathered body, with a man delivering a sermon in the presence of the flock and the corporate presence and encouragement of the Holy Spirit during both its delivery and reception.

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Second, I am not encouraging you to simply have a quiet time of reading and praying in front of your family. *Family worship* is more than your personal quiet time with an audience.

Third, I am not encouraging you to do something that takes hours of preparation and an hour to carry out. This kind of approach has caused many men to avoid leading their families in worship. I often felt this way when my kids were growing up. It was daunting. I couldn't imagine being able to lead a mini-worship service in our home every day. Family worship is much more organic and wonderful than what some have imagined.

And by the way, your kids won't, and don't expect them to, sit perfectly still and quiet. This isn't a Norman Rockwell painting we are talking about, it's a family! Make it exciting and fun to gather around God's word.

Well then, you might ask, what exactly *am* I encouraging you to do? It's actually rather simple. First read, then pray, then sing. That's it! Read, pray, sing.

Read. No preparation is needed for this. Choose a book of the Bible and read a portion of it every day. When you finish the story, close your Bible, mark the place, and come back to it the next day and begin reading again. If you have small children, you might focus on narrative, or story, passages. You might use other aids such as videos from The Bible Project to introduce a book or a certain topic or doctrine. These are wonderfully produced videos that are appropriate for all ages (adults and children) and are very helpful in conveying Biblical truth ([www.bibleproject.com](http://www.bibleproject.com)).

After you read, start a brief discussion about what you read. Ask age-appropriate questions that start your family thinking about both the truth you read and what that truth means to them. Sometimes your conversation will be longer and more in-depth and sometimes it will be short or non-existent. Don't worry either way!

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**Just move on to the next element of worship . . .**

**Pray. Spend time praying together. Your kids will learn how to pray as they listen to mom and dad pray. Ask everyone to pray and help them to know what things to pray for. For instance, you might start your prayer time by praying something from the passage you just read. For instance, after reading Mark 1:29-34 about Jesus' ministry of healing, you might ask your family, "Who do we know that needs Jesus' healing?" and then pray for those people. The next day when you read about Jesus devoting time to prayer (Mark 1:35) you could ask your family who they should pray for today and pray for the list you make. Pray for your family, pray for your church and her leaders, pray for grandparents and other family members, pray for their friends, pray for our nation and her leaders, and the list could go on. Don't try to pray for everything every day and remember to allow for everyone to contribute by praying.**

**Sing. Interestingly, the Bible never says, "Sing with a trained, pear-shaped, angelic voice to the Lord." But we are commanded many times to sing, sing joyfully, sing praises, sing to the Lord, sing psalms & hymns & spiritual songs, sing together, sing to each other, etc. So sing! You can sing out of a hymnal, from a song sheet with words, sing along with YouTube videos, sing with someone in your family playing an instrument, whatever helps you to sing as a family!**

**So that's it! Open your Bible, read a passage, discuss something from the passage if you can, pray, and sing. 10-15 minutes is great! As our kids get older, or if you are a couple with no kids at home, your discussion and prayer will be longer. If you miss it one day, don't fret! Just pick it up again tomorrow. Don't neglect this wonderful opportunity because you think you are not capable. If you are a dad, lead your children. If you are a husband, lead your wife. If you are a single mom, lead your children. The only way to fail at family worship is to fail to worship as a family. Train your children up in the fear and knowledge of the Lord. Diligently teach your children about your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let them**

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see your joy as you teach them what it means to follow Christ!

Don Whitney tells the story of one of his most cherished memories. His daughter graduated from a Christian school in which the parents handed the graduates their diploma and both parents and graduate were allowed to speak. The graduates were to say words of thanksgiving to their parents, and Don's daughter thanked him for leading family worship and let him know how much it meant to her. She was so moved she began sobbing uncontrollably and couldn't finish. Don said that the picture of her sobbing in his arms is his favorite picture of them together.

I've alluded to many Scripture passages in this admonition, and there are many references I could leave you with, but I'll leave you with these few to start your study.

“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

Deuteronomy 11:18-20; 32:46-47; Psalm 78:5-7; 128:1-6; Proverbs 1:8; 4:1-27; 22:6; 23:22-26; Ephesians 5:22-6:4.

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