

Worthy of Family Worship

First Steps for Christian Homes

Article by

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After nearly a half-century in ministry, including preaching in 47 states, it is my observation that few Christian homes practice regular family worship. I would even venture to say that in *most of our best churches, most of our best men* do not lead their wives — and children if they have them — in family worship.

Having your family in a good, Bible-teaching local church is crucial to a Christian marriage and parenting. But it is unlikely that church attendance alone will impress your children with the greatness and glory of God such that they will want to pursue him once they leave home. In this article, I want to convey one main point: God deserves to be worshiped daily in our homes by our families.

Worthy of Daily Worship

The Bible clearly implies that God deserves to be worshiped daily in our homes by our families.

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Although there are few explicit commandments in Scripture about family worship (though see [Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#)), evidence for its practice abounds. For example, Abraham evidently led his family in the worship of God; otherwise, how would Isaac

have known to ask, “Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” ([Genesis 22:7](#))? Leading his family in worship is something that “Job did continually” ([Job 1:5](#)).

Family worship is one of the best and most practical ways husbands administer the cleansing water of the word of God to their wives ([Ephesians 5:25–26](#)) and fathers bring their children up “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” ([Ephesians 6:4](#)). When Peter commands husbands to show honor to their wives “so that your prayers may not be hindered” ([1 Peter 3:7](#)), he is likely referring to mutual prayers, not merely those of the husband.

Our Little Churches

The lives of our Christian heroes also testify that God deserves to be worshiped daily in our homes by our families.

The growing emphasis on family worship today is not a contemporary Christian fad. A study of church history reveals that believers have always understood the Bible to teach the practice. We know, for example, that the first generation of Christ-followers after the apostles read a portion of Scripture, prayed, and sang Psalms together as families. The same was true for Luther, Knox, and the Puritans. Both the Westminster Confession (1647) and the Second London Confession (1689), the most influential of all Baptist confessions of faith, contain the identical phrase: “God is to be worshiped everywhere in spirit and in truth; *as in private families daily*, and in secret each one by himself” (emphasis added).

Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, the missionary John G. Paton, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones, though all had many heavy responsibilities, led their families in the daily worship of God. Virtually all of our Christian heroes could be shown to believe what Edwards declared: “Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church” (*Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 25:484). And part of the life of every church and every Christian is worship.

Three Simple Steps

Every Christian family is able to show that God deserves to be worshiped daily in our homes. The essence of family worship is simple. It requires no preparation. It can take as little as ten minutes. It consists of three single syllables: read, pray, sing.

READ

The heart of family worship is hearing God's word through reading the Bible. Focus on Bible stories if you have young children. Some use a good story Bible at this age. As children get older, move to the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament, with a goal of eventually reading all the Scriptures. Briefly explain terms your family may not understand. A study Bible can help here. You may want to ask questions during or after the reading to improve everyone's understanding.

PRAY

The husband/father can pray, he can ask someone to pray, or everyone can pray. To avoid saying basically the same things every time, I'd recommend the simple practice of praying about at least one thing you heard in the Bible.

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For example, after reading John 3, you could ask, “Who is someone we could pray for to be born again like Nicodemus?” From John 4 the next night, “Who is a woman whom we could pray would meet Jesus like the woman at the well met Jesus?” Also, asking each person, “How would you like for us to pray for you?” not only personalizes the experience, but can be the means of discovering previously unspoken feelings and needs.

SING

I get more responses of “Seriously?” on this one than with any other element. But in the short list of activities the Bible tells us to do in worship, singing is prominent. Some of the activities the Bible requires of acceptable worship are congregational by nature, such as preaching and the practice of the ordinances. But three activities on that list can be done whether the worship is congregational, individual, or familial: Bible reading, prayer, and worshipful singing.

This can be as brief as the Doxology, or as long as an entire hymn or chorus. Although this is a great time to utilize family musicians or Internet helps, my observation is that most families sing without musical accompaniment. I’d suggest getting songbooks for each member of the family. Consult the pastor or worship leader at your church for other resources.

If Time Permits

Beyond the essential *read*, *pray*, and *sing* elements of family worship, here are some ideas to enrich the experience while your family is together.

Catechize. This question-and-answer method of teaching biblical truth has been employed by the church since her earliest days. If you’re unfamiliar with a good catechism in your own church’s tradition, ask your pastor for recommendations.

Discover why, along with family worship, catechizing is being rediscovered as a valuable family discipleship tool.

Scripture memory. Family worship is an ideal time to review verses your family may be learning in other settings, such as church or school. Even if you learn just one verse a month, that’s twelve verses a year and more than most Christian families are learning together.

Other reading. If time allows, you might start your time together with some general reading, after which you read, pray, and sing. Or afterward, take advantage of the time together to read a Christian book or biography with your family.

Growing Oaks of Righteousness

Every family is a beehive of busyness. Making the time — even ten minutes — for family worship is a challenge for everyone. And most families are tempted to think their schedule or circumstances are unique, at least when it comes to making family worship a regular priority. The truth is there's almost no barrier to family worship that has not been addressed by Christians for centuries. Where there's a desire for family worship — and some flexibility — there's almost always a way.

Don't expect immediate results. In fact, most nights it may seem that more family chaos occurs than family worship. That's normal, even when you're leading well. We're raising families to be "oaks of righteousness" ([Isaiah 61:3](#)), and even in ideal conditions an oak develops very slowly and over a long time.

Starting Today

Perhaps your family, like many others, has not yet begun regular family worship. If you're a wife reading this, consider showing it to your husband. Husbands, consider saying to your wives, "I've come to believe that the Bible teaches that I should be leading us in family worship, and I want to start today. I have a lot to learn about it, but I want to do what's right. Will you join me?"

Regardless of what anyone else does, let every husband and father — indeed, every Christian — reading these lines commit to this: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" in family worship ([Joshua 24:15](#)). Isn't this what you really *want* to do?

My little book *Family Worship* goes into more detail about what I've written here, including answers to some of the most common questions about family worship, as well as other practical tips. Today is the day to read, to pray, and to sing your family into eternity.

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