

The What, When, and How of Family Worship

[Editor's Note: This is the second half of Jason's series on family worship. Check out the first half, "[11 Reasons to Worship with Your Family](#)."]

Few of us who grew up in homes that practiced family worship. So let's look at a few practical helps that may aid our families in this new journey.

Find the Best Time

This is trial and error, but most families function better at certain times during the day than others. Some children (and parents!) do not do well in the early morning hours. They are tired and grouchy. If that is the case in your home, then don't try and do family worship at that time. Try different times of the day and see what works best for everyone. Every family is different.

Meet at the Same Time

I usually schedule out my week. I have different activities appointed at different times and inevitably have "family time" penciled in for 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. or something similar. When my wife is feeling a little neglected she will say, "You have to schedule your family?" She is joking, but if she was serious I would have to reply, "Yes." Otherwise, other things begin to encroach upon this time. There are many good things that can and will fill our schedules. Therefore, if we don't pencil in the things that matter the most, they often get neglected and suffer at the expense of other things in our life. Family worship must be scheduled. That does not mean that it has to be at 6 p.m. every night. It is a "semi-fixed" time. There are some nights that dinner isn't over by 6 p.m. Don't be rigid, but do have a consistent and routine time that your family knows they will be gathering for worship.

Meet in the Same Place

Some families gather around the kitchen or dining room table. Others may choose to sit in the living room or on the back porch. It doesn't really matter where you do family worship. It just helps if the "where" is consistent in your home. This is especially helpful for young children. My children know that when we say it is time for family worship we are gathering in the family room. Children thrive in the known and regular.

Start Slow

We are beginning the process of returning the church to this necessary discipline. Hopefully our children will be able to take it a step farther, but for most of us this is a new thing. Therefore, do not expect too much too early or even expect too much from your family in the long run. Many heads of homes (especially fathers) will be convicted about the need for family worship and begin to lead their families in it with too much zeal. Fathers, don't ask your children to start memorizing Leviticus in the first few weeks of family worship! Just start by reading a small portion of Scripture, praying a short prayer, and singing a hymn. As *everyone* in the family grows in worshiping together there will be the ability and desire to make it fuller.

Jason Helopoulos, guest blogger on Kevin DeYoung's blog, posted March 10, 2011 - thegospelcoalition.org

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Make It Brief

Family worship should not be a burden, and many times we make it a burden by making it too long. Young families especially need to keep this in mind due to their children. Those just beginning family worship would also be well-advised to keep it short. It is amazing how much quality worship can take place in 15 or 20 minutes. The length of time of our family worship is not a commentary on our family's maturity in the faith. Longer doesn't always mean better.

Make It a Priority

It must be a priority in the home. This means that we can't allow other activities to fill our schedules. A family that is seldom home together is a family that cannot worship together. Reading the Bible on the way to gymnastics or soccer practice does not count! The modern-day Christian needs to hear this: busyness (even with church activities) does not equal godliness.

Be Flexible

Having argued for the importance of establishing a time for family worship, we must underscore the importance of being flexible in our approach to family worship. There will be days when it just doesn't work. If this is a regular occurrence, then we may need to adjust when we are having family worship or where we are having it. However, some days it just won't work at all. That is fine! It is a means of grace, not a burden that our family is to struggle under.

Model the Right Attitude

Our attitudes have a lot to do with our experiences. And others are always watching our attitudes. Husbands should model the right attitude before their wives, and parents should model the right attitude before their children. Children are incredibly intuitive. They know when mom and dad are going through the motions or begrudgingly calling the family together in worship. It is quite another thing altogether when mom and dad talk about looking forward to worship and exercise a consistent joy and desire for family worship.

Persevere

Maybe the most important advice for family worship is to persevere in it. There will be moments and even weeks where it seems like a chore and that little fruit is being born: your toddler has trouble sitting still, your teenager complains every night, or the tune keeps getting lost in the middle of singing. Just keep going! You are not alone, and your situation is not unique. Just keep gathering with your family in worship. Perseverance is the best remedy for all these ills. Over the course of time, most of these struggles will be overcome, and fruit that was invisible at the time will begin to show itself in the future.

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