

Family Devotions: A How to Guide

The encouragement: *There is no “one size fits all” for family devotions or family worship*

Definition: “An intentional regular gathering with family members for the purpose of increasing knowledge, love, and obedience to God & His Word”

I. Where do it?

- Other discipleship you may do on the go spontaneously,
- Family Devotions (needs a comfortable, familiar setting- the best place is your home)
- Provide as much as is possible an interruption free atmosphere (silence phones, place everyone can sit comfortably, require attentiveness)
- In my family, we do it before bed in my kids room

II. When should you do it?

- Consistency is key- “repetition is the mother of all learning”
- The more you do it, the more they’ll expect it!
- Family won’t always be engaged 100% (cater your expectations accordingly), but making it a regular habit will be key
 - Similar to faithful watering for seeds to grow
 - You don’t grow an oak by a spectacular exposure, it’s daily mundane repeated care- Donald Whitney (Isaiah 61:3). Real life and real change can happen in family worship, not some heaven coming down and Pentecost type experience on the regular!
- Don’t give up! Worth it even if awkward- minister to each other!
- If you miss days or weeks, don’t beat yourself up, just get on the horse and keep trying at it!
- You can teach reverence for God’s Word and may need to correct and get them to pay attention or stop looking at their phone or playing with a toy, but don’t be scolding
- Schedule considerations:
 - Ideally daily: as frequently as is possible especially for little kids before they are able to read

- Set a more moderate goal: Every family or single parent has a unique situation (work schedules, etc), but usually “the more the better”
- Idea- little kids most everyday, teens maybe more weekly- on Sunday night kind of thing?
- Make it a priority or squeeze it in? Pray about shifting your schedule around to make it important and a priority!

Time of Day/Week considerations

- Morning breakfast time (kids getting ready for school)
- Evening: Dinner time or after kids are in their room getting ready for bed
- Better to do consistent and short devotions than long 45 minute+ ones sporadically
- Time recommendation (attention span awareness) 15 minutes
- Richard Cecil “*Let family worship be short, savory, simple, tender, heavenly.*”

III. What should you do?

★ Preparing your family if you never did it before

- Repent for any spiritual negligence before your family
- Consider Ephesians 6:4 *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*
- Fathers should bear the responsibility for delegating this
- Do it in a time sensitive and relatable, easy to understand context so you don’t exasperate your kids or provoke them to anger (if they are often grumpy in the morning, or maybe too tired at bedtime, consider trying out different things)

“MSRP”- What family worship can consist of:

- Have a plan that doesn’t need preparation
- 1) **Memorize (Verses/Catechism)**
 - 2) **Sing-** recorded is fine, live is good too!
 - 3) **Read-**

- a) No preaching or Lord's supper (you should assemble Heb 10 & 1 Cor 11 you should take communion with local church body)
 - b) Dialogue, not a lecture/sermon
 - c) "If you don't give your children answers, they'll get them somewhere else."
 - d) Ideally something that works for all ages
 - e) Other option: divide into groups (maybe older kids morning, younger kids in evening for example)
 - f) Bible choices (full text/kids Bibles)
 - g) Questions are a good thing and show they're engaged (it's okay to say "IDK" and learn more and come back- model humility)
- a) What does this passage tell us about God? (Who is God and what has God done in history?)*
- b) What does this passage tell us about us as humans? (What's our identity? What has gone right or wrong?)*
- c) What does this passage tell us about how we should live or not live?*
- 4) **Pray-** everyone, one person
- a) Pray about one thing you read in the Bible that night (teach family to pray scripture-based prayers)
 - b) Thomas Brooks "A family without prayer is like a house without a roof, open and exposed to all the storms of heaven."

IV. How?

From Joel Beeke's *Family Worship* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009), 25-28.

- 1) Pure Doctrine
- 2) Plain Understanding
- 3) Affectionate Tone
- 4) Relevant Application
- 5) Require Attention

You'll often wonder if anything was accomplished

- Here's John Paton's story for encouragement

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/john-g-patons-father>