

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO FAMILY WORSHIP

The idea of family worship is at once both attractive and intimidating. The thought of beginning a new pattern of worship in the home can be overwhelming for those just beginning. This simple guide includes answers to basic questions that we hope will embolden and equip you to lead your family in worship in addition to your time in personal worship.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT FAMILY WORSHIP?

The importance of the home in discipleship is prominent throughout the Bible (Deut. 6:6-7; Ps. 78:5-7; Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). Parents, especially fathers, are primarily responsible for the spiritual instruction and vitality of their families (Eph. 6:1-3). This task is great and weighty, but God's grace is greater, and the eternal rewards are beyond anything this world can offer.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF FAMILY WORSHIP?

- Family worship brings glory to God. It is a visible reminder for all in the home that God is worthy of our time, attention, and affection.
- Family worship produces joy in the home. The joy Jesus brings to individuals He will bring to families who delight in His worship together. The love of Christ will more easily abound in a home where worship is central.
- Family worship affects change in the world. As families pray, study, and sing together, they join from their homes in what God is doing across the nations while affecting each other's lives for generations to come.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO DURING FAMILY WORSHIP?

Keep it simple. Consider including the following elements as you worship in your home:

- **Read**—Read a portion of the Word together. You may consider reading some or all of the day's reading from MBC's Bible Reading Plan. Don't worry if you've already read it in personal time with the Lord; reading a chapter a second time will only reinforce what God is teaching you. If children are present and able to read, allow them to do so. Of course, you'll want to explain difficult words and concepts (but don't worry too much if you can't explain everything!). After reading the Word together, work through a simple process like MAPS (Meditate, Apply, Pray, and Share), much like you do in personal Bible reading. You might even share with your family what you learned in your personal Bible reading.

- **Pray**—Consider voicing prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication (prayers for needs) together. You might even follow the acronym PRAY (Praise, Repent, Ask, Yield). You can pray for things related to what you read together or for things that are pertinent to your family. You might even consider praying for those who have yet to hear about Jesus through the Joshua Project “Unreached of the Day” app. Try to give every family member a chance to pray, even if on a rotating basis. Additionally, you may want to maintain a prayer journal that enables you to keep track of prayer requests and God’s answers to those requests.
- **Sing**—Sing together as a family. If someone in the family has musical gifts, they may lead some simple songs. If no one in your family is musical, either use a recording (you can find them on YouTube or on most streaming music services) or just sing a cappella.
- **Memorize**—Whether a verse (or verses) is suggested or selected by a family member, work on it together. The beginning of the week may be spent both understanding and memorizing the verse(s). By the end of the week, allow everyone to repeat the verse(s). Review of verses may be carried out over the course of the year.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FAMILY WORSHIP

1. What if the father is not a Christian?

The commands regarding family discipleship in the Bible assume a believing father in the home. Of course, this is not always the case. In those instances where the father is not a believer, the mother will need to assume this role. We encourage mothers to take this initiative with humility, kindness, and respect for the father in a home.

2. What about a single parent family?

Again, in this case the responsibility falls to the single parent. This is a heavy burden to bear in addition to many other duties but know that God will supply great grace and will more than make up for any natural deficiency we may perceive.

3. What if my kids are very young?

Having very young children will change the dynamic of family worship considerably. Remember, however, that the goal for every child in the family is not the same. With very young children, the goal is probably not understanding of all matters of doctrine. A more “modest” goal of impressing upon them the importance of family worship (and God) is more reasonable and beneficial at their particular age.

4. How do I keep things interesting if I have children of different ages and different abilities?

For young children, try to include them as much as possible and appropriate. Of course, all members of the family can pray and sing (at least some songs). Furthermore, allow younger children to read when possible. For the older children, try including them in the teaching and application of the Scripture reading for the rest of the family and in the leadership of prayer and singing on occasion.

5. What if I have a child with special needs?

Having children with special needs participate in family worship is very possible and even beneficial! Depending on your child’s abilities, make the family time play to their strengths; add in visuals, act out the Bible story, and don’t worry if you need to make sections shorter if some children have a shorter attention span.

6. What time of day is best for family worship?

The time of day is not the most critical element of family worship. Some families prefer to worship as the day begins. For others, the morning hours are simply too hectic for family worship. In these cases, evening may work best. Many families prefer to adjoin family worship to the evening meal since all the family may be present at that time. In short, timing is far less important than consistency.

RESOURCES FOR FAMILY WORSHIP

[Family Worship: In the Bible, in History & in Your Home \(Donald Whitney\)](#). This short, but potentially life-changing book covers the motivation and importance of family worship. Once you're convinced of the value of family worship, here are some resources that could be useful for family worship...

- [The Big Picture Story Bible](#) (David Helm). If you have young children, this is a must have resource. Simple but gospel-rich storytelling. Great pictures.
- [The Jesus Storybook Bible](#) (Sally Lloyd-Jones). Another must have for those with young children. Beautiful pictures and writing. Like Big Picture, the author connects each Bible story to the Bible's central character and central message, Christ and His saving work.
- [God's Very Good Idea](#) (Trillia Newbell). A wonderful explanation of the gospel! This book will help children see how people from all ethnic and social backgrounds are valuable to God, and how Jesus came to rescue all kinds of people.
- [Mighty Acts of God](#) (Starr Meade). Much like the previous, except that it gives more detail and tells more stories. It's a good Bible to let your reading-age son/daughter take to bed and begin his/her personal times of reading Scripture.
- [Thoughts to Make Your Heart Sing](#) (Sally Lloyd-Jones). Sometimes a great sign of maturity in faith is seen through one's increasing ability to connect the gospel to everything in life. This book is a primer on seeing how the gospel relates to everyday life.
- [The Ology: Ancient Truths, Ever New](#) (Marty Machowski). An excellent book to help kids of all ages understand who God is and how we, as his children, relate to him. While this book is very helpful for kids, parents will gain a lot from it as well.
- [The Biggest Story: How the Snake Crusher Brings Us Back to the Garden](#) (Kevin DeYoung). an exciting journey through the Bible, connecting the dots from the garden of Eden to Christ's death on the cross to the new heaven and new earth. This book has great illustrations and is best for elementary age children.
- [Long Story Short: Ten-Minute Devotions to Draw Your Family to God](#) (Marty Machowski). A one-stop-shop resource. Gives brief Bible reading, brief devotional thought, asks good questions for family discussion. Offers helps for family prayer. Gospel-centered.
- [The Big Book of Questions and Answers: A Family Devotional Guide to the Christian Faith](#) (Sinclair Ferguson). Ferguson does a good job making big truths accessible to little children.

- **The Real Story books by Paul Maier:** [The Real Story of the Creation](#); [The Real Story of the Flood](#); [The Real Story of the Exodus](#); [The Very First Christmas](#); [The Real Story of Easter](#); These are great books to use during family worship, particularly as you approach a holiday (Christmas/Easter).
- [Grandpa's Box: Retelling the Biblical Story of Redemption](#) (Starr Meade). Meade uses a story of children visiting their grandpa as the backdrop for teaching the one big story of the Bible. Readings can take (if memory serves) 10+ minutes, so it's probably better for older kids (maybe 8 and up).
- [Big Truths for Young Hearts](#) (Bruce Ware). Devotional chapters written to unpack major doctrines (God as Creator, etc.). Can be doctrinally heavy (in a good way). For older kids. Readings take about 15 minutes.

Some resources for bedtime reading, road trips, etc....

- [Dangerous Journey](#) (Hunkin/Bunyan). An easy to read (and with pictures!) version of Bunyan's classic, Pilgrim's Progress. Younger ones will have a hard time comprehending it all and (warning) some pictures are a little gruesome.
- [Keeping Holiday](#) (Starr Meade). A Christian allegory akin to Pilgrim's Progress. Excellent portrayals of how temptation works and many other biblical motifs. Great refrains about "the Finder." Older kids (maybe from 8+) will get the most out of it.
- [The Priest with Dirty Clothes](#) (R.C. Sproul). Great story and beautiful pictures. Helpful teaching and conversation starter toward understanding the vital doctrine of imputation/justification.
- [The Lightnings](#) (R.C. Sproul). Great story and beautiful pictures. A retelling of the big story - creation, sin, salvation.
- [The Prince's Poison Cup](#) (R.C. Sproul). Great story and beautiful pictures. Helps teach the truth that Christ took our curse for our salvation.
- [The Barber Who Wanted to Pray](#) (R.C. Sproul). For centuries the main go to's for family worship were the Lord's Prayer, the 10 commandments, the Apostle's Creed (see Westminster for some help here as well). So when Martin Luther's barber asked him how to pray Luther went to those three. This is a storied and kid-friendly version of what Luther wrote to his friend the barber.
- [The King Without a Shadow](#) (R.C. Sproul). Like the other Sproul books, the content is very good. The concept of God's holiness/otherness is a bit more difficult to capture in story form. So this is abstract at times and may be more difficult for young children to grasp.