

Family Devotions

I would like to encourage families who are trying to conduct family worship. This is an extremely valuable practice which honors God and from which our children will reap incalculable benefits. Like any other valuable practice, this is one Satan tries hard to hinder us in. Some people get discouraged in family devotionals because they feel so inadequate to conduct them. Sometimes it is hard to find the proper time for them, especially as the family gets older and people begin to go their own ways. This will not be comprehensive, but I want to offer a few suggestions. First, do something!

Something is better than nothing. A family devotional does not have to be elaborately planned. It can often consist of singing, praying, and reading and comment on some portion of Scripture. One project my family greatly enjoyed was in singing all the songs in the Old School Hymnal in one year. Of course, we had to sing several songs a night to get through the book. Sometimes we would miss a day or two and would have to have a few “catch up” sessions. Sometimes, while traveling, we would “catch up” for an hour or more! {Always carry your song books with you on trips}.

Usually, in the morning, we will read one of the daily devotions that I have written, while at the breakfast table. I am not always here for that, but Judy is very consistent in this. Our nighttime devotions are usually conducted as soon after supper as possible. We sing some songs. Since we have such a great age range among our children, we always have to include a few little children’s songs. Then, we have some Scripture reading and prayer. Usually several of us pray. We name prayer requests before we begin to pray. Right after supper, while mom and the girls are cleaning up, I get my smaller children in the living room and study with them from the Bible Doctrine Drill and Catechism that I have written. For the very small (Mercy is our youngest at 4 years old), I drill and drill on Bible facts. For the younger children I work with them from certain sections of the drill. I usually coordinate this with what I do with part of our Wednesday night services. I do not believe in the modern Sunday school and I do not believe in dividing the flock during worship services. However I do believe in cooperating with the parents in our church. Each week I assign certain sections of the drill for the parents to go over with their children. Then on Wednesday night, right after we sing a few songs, I question the children in the presence of the entire congregation. My eight-year-old, Nathan, will tell you loud and clear that God has an elect people and that Jesus Christ effectually secured their salvation.

One final word. Pray, pray, pray! The most structured and well-planned devotional time in the world can be very dry and boring without the presence of the Holy Spirit. Aim for these to be enjoyable times. Remember that as your children grow you will have to make changes in your approach to things. Be flexible and if God gives you a “golden moment” be willing to alter your approach occasionally. If you miss a devotional or two don’t get discouraged. What you are after is a lifestyle that your children will remember all the days of their lives.

Remember, that for Christians all of life is really a devotional. Look for things in everyday events, as you drive, as you eat, as you play, that can be used as opportunities to teach your children about

the things of the Lord. Remember what was said in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”

Dear Christian parents, do not become discouraged in this effort. You may not see immediate results, but the results of what you are doing are going to be profound. I read about a prisoner of war who kept his sanity by meditating on verses of Scripture his mother had made him memorize against his will while he was a very small child! That brings up one more thought—memorize!! A child’s mind is like a sponge. It is amazing what a child can memorize if made to do just a little on a consistent basis. Some of my children over the years have memorized the entire books of Ephesians, Philippians, James, 1 John, and several others. They have memorized several verses to defend each of the so-called Five Points of Grace. Do a little each day. Be very consistent in this. If one would memorize only two verses a week, that would be over one hundred in the course of a year. That would be over 500 in ten years! What better than Scripture with which to fill the minds of our children?

These are just a few suggestions that I pray will be helpful.

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