

## Worship in the Home—Family Devotions

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How many of you have an altar in your home? How many of you have a designated time when you with the rest of your family gather together around the Word of God to hear Him speak to you, when you unite in lifting up your voices in prayer, praising and asking Him for His blessings, and when you might sing His praises? You might wonder why a person would have an altar in one's home. During the days of Paul this was not unusual. "Likewise greet the church that is in their house" (Rom. 16:5). "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house" (Col. 4:15). It was appropriate in apostolic times for Christians to make their homes available for the gathering place of the church, *ekkleesia*, the called, the chosen of God. When we have worship services, we usually have an altar. It does not have to be as big as the altars that we have in our churches. In many cases it is the kitchen table. Nor do we have to have the neighbors in for worship services once a week to have an altar in our homes. The kitchen table might serve as an altar for family devotion. The question might be asked, how many of you have family devotion in your home?

What lies behind this question is another question. Is it necessary to have family devotion? To answer that question we must turn to God's Word to see what our Lord has to say concerning family devotion or worship in the home.

### A Word Study

The word "devotion" is found only once in the King James Version (A.V.). Acts 17:23 reads: "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, *To The Unknown God*. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." "Devotions" is derived from the word *sebō*. This word is also translated "worship." The same word is found in II Thess. 2:4: "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Other derivations of the same word (*sebasma*) are found in Rom. 1:25: "Who changeth the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever Amen." (*sebazō*). Matt. 15:9 and Mark 7:7: "But in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (*sebomai*). Acts 16:14: "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us." Cf. also Acts 18:7, 13; 19:27. In all of these cases the word *sebō* or its derivations has the meaning to venerate, to worship, or to show reverence. We point this out to show, as the title of this paper indicates, that worship in the home is the same as family devotion in the home since the word "worship" and the word "devotion" have the same root.

Whereas the word "devotion" is found as the translation of *sebō* in only one place in the Bible, we have noted that it is translated as "worship" in many other places in the Bible (A.V.). There are other words which have the same meaning as *sebō*, however. Looking at the Old Testament we read, "And Abraham said unto his young men, 'Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you'" (Gen. 22:5). (*shachah*, to bow oneself down). This is the word that is used most commonly in the Old Testament to indicate worship being used more than 170 times. Its New Testament equivalent is *proskuneō*, which literally means "to kiss toward." It is used more than 60 times in the New Testament. It is also

the word used in the LXX to translate *shachah*. It was used to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before another and kissing his feet, the hem of his garment, or the ground. This word is used by Jesus when He warded off the devil. “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10). Jesus was quoting Deuteronomy 6:13 which reads (A.V.) “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name.” Here the word *yare*, to fear, to reverence, to tremble is used. The idea with this word is that one person is in a position of subjection to another. The one feared is over the fearing one. This word is used more than 300 times in the Old Testament to indicate “worship.”

From this we see that worshipping God was a very important part in the life of the people during Biblical times. It should also hold an important part in our lives. To worship the Lord is not a matter of choice. It is commanded by the Lord. It is something that the Lord requires of the individual, the family, and the congregation.

### **The Purpose**

The family devotion is a time when the family gets together for the purpose of worshipping the Lord. This is the main purpose of the family devotion as the word “devotion” indicates. What a person does when he worships the Lord is as varied as the order of service we follow on a Sunday morning. We might ask what our purpose of worshipping the Lord on a Sunday morning is. Knowing that much of the Sunday morning service is for the purpose of hearing the Word of God, we would say that having an altar in our homes would serve the same purpose. In this section of the paper we will look at what we accomplish by hearing the Word of God.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:16, 17). Doctrine, *didaskalia*, is the thing which is taught, or the substance which is taught. Reproof, *elegchos*, is conviction. *Elegchos* “is so to rebuke another, with such effectual wielding of the victorious arms of the truth, as to bring him, if not always to a confession, yet at least to a conviction, of his sin” (Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, p. 13). Correction, *epanorthōsis*, is similar to reproof but instead of emphasizing the negative side of what has to be corrected, it directs one to the correct direction one should go. It is a setting aright. Instruction, *paideia*, is the same word that we find in Ephesians 6:4: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture...of the Lord.” It is also translated “chastening” in Hebrews 12:5, 7, 11 (A.V.). Scriptures are profitable for these things.

Why do we want doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction? The answer is given to us. The purpose why we want these things is so “that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” That the man of God may be perfect, *artious*. Trench says of this word, “It is not as the presence only of all the parts which are necessary for that completeness, but involves further the adaptation and aptitude of these parts for the ends which they were designed to serve. The man of God, St. Paul would say (II Tim. 3:17), should be furnished and accomplished with all which is necessary for the carrying out of the work to which he is appointed” (p. 77). The “man of God” is to be complete. He is to have no part lacking. But without the Word of God which is given by inspiration of God the “man of God” will not be “perfect.” Indeed, if he does not hear the Word of God at all, he will not even be a “man of God.”

This leads us to another purpose for having family devotions where the Word of God is read. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17.)

Before we look at this passage, we will first of all look at another aspect for which Scripture is “profitable.” “Comfort” is often added to the list mentioned in II Timothy 3:16. Paul, speaking to the Romans, says, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (15:4). Comfort, *paraklēsis*, is literally a calling to one’s side. It is the same word that is used to describe the Holy Ghost Whom Jesus promised to send to His disciples (John 15:26). It is also translated “consolation” (Luke 2:25, 6:24; Acts 15:31). We are to have hope through the comfort that Scriptures give. One of the purposes for reading and studying the Word of God is to receive the comfort that God would give to us through His Word. “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her” (Isa. 40:1, 2a). God speaks to us in His Word. He cries unto us to listen to Him. What He tells us is “that her (our) warfare is accomplished, that her (our) iniquity is pardoned: for she (we have) has received double for all her (our) sins” (40:2b). The purpose of having family devotions is to give us doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction, and comfort. There are other gifts that could be added to this list.

One such gift is faith. Let us return to Romans 10:17. Faith is very important in the life of the Christian. Without it a person is doomed to damnation. “He that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16b). It is important for us to hear the Word of God. It is through the Word of God that the Holy Ghost first of all works faith in our hearts and secondly strengthens that faith which He has begun there. It might seem as though the Apostle is repeating himself with the double use of the word “hearing.” He is not. Faith comes from what is heard. The act of hearing comes from the Word of Christ. “Faith comes through the message of preaching. Where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed, one may well expect faith to be kindled; for this preaching is the prerequisite of faith, faith depends upon the preaching of the Gospel. And preaching, in turn, is through the Word of Christ” (Kretzmann). When we consider a passage such as this, we can see that family devotion is important for both the adult members in a family as well as for the children in the family.

Another passage closely related to this one is II Peter 3:18. “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever.” We are to grow, *auxanō*, to increase. This is both a command, and an act that is to be continued throughout the life of the individual. It is hard to grow when one eats one meal a week. Such eating habits would make one weak. It is difficult to imagine how it would be possible for a Christian to subsist on one meal of the Word of God a week. Certainly there would be little growth there, if any at all. When we have our children in confirmation class, they are growing “in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” After they are finished with confirmation instructions, they seem to shrink many times. It is interesting to note that Jesus grew in the same manner that we are encouraged to grow. “And Jesus increased (literally, He grew) in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). Under the passage written by Peter the Concordia Bible with notes says, “The grand safeguard against the seductions of error, and the most powerful means of increase in holiness, is increasing knowledge of Jesus Christ.” What a wonderful blessing is ours and our family’s when we increase in the conviction that we possess, by the grace of our Lord, the merits that Jesus Christ has earned for us, and there is an inheritance waiting for us, which our Lord has gone to prepare for us. Certainly, our Lord knew what He was talking about when He told His disciples, “If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth

shall make you free” (John 8:31). As disciples of Jesus we are to remain, *menō*, in His Word. Paul told Timothy the same. “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of” (II Tim. 3:14). Here we have an imperative also. This is something that must be done. Notice also the blessed results. “Ye shall know the truth.” “Ye shall be free.” There is nothing more that we could want in this world which tries to fill us with its hollow and deceitful philosophy.

The question is asked, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” and the answer is given, “By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word” (Psa. 119:9). Watching, observing, *shamar*, the Word of God, letting it be one’s lamp unto one’s feet and a light unto one’s way, is the answer given to the question of how a person can cleanse his way. The devil is ever present. He is always trying to devour us. But the taste of Jesus Christ in his mouth causes him to spit us out again. This does not mean that he will not try again and again to devour us. He will try. In order that we are always ready to give him an answer to his temptations, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is our weapon against the old evil foe just as it was the weapon that Jesus used.

Some family devotions include children depending upon the family. Earlier we noted that fathers are to “bring them (the children) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” The best place to find the nurture and admonition of the Lord is in His Word. We have already considered the meaning of the word “nurture” in connection with II Timothy 3:15. Admonition, *nouthesia*, is “training by word—by the word of encouragement...as set over against the training by act and by discipline” (Trench p. 112). The Lord is to speak to our children when we admonish them. Granted, we might not be having family devotions at the time that the admonition is needed. But, as the family devotion is held, the admonition might come in advance so that the child knows to avoid the evil he might otherwise be led into.

Our Lord, after giving various admonitions to the Children of Israel in the form of commandments, said, “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” (Deut. 6:6-9). It seems as though the Lord was telling the Children of Israel to commit to memory the words that He had given to them. We are in danger of forgetting what the Lord has done for us, giving His life as a sacrifice for us, conquering sin, death, and the devil for us, assuring us of everlasting life, and giving us countless other blessings. We are in danger of forgetting what the Lord has shown to us so that we might cleanse our ways. To have *daily* family devotions would be one way in which we could keep the truth before the eye of our minds. Then we would be able to say with Joshua, “If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve:...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (24:15). Teach diligently, *shanan*, to sharpen or to repeat indicates that we should deeply engrave these truths into our minds and into the minds of our children. Luther says, “I, too, am a theologian who has attained a fairly good practical knowledge and experience of Holy Scripture through various dangers. But I do not so glory in this gift as not to join my children daily in prayerfully reciting the Catechism, that is, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer and meditating on them with an attentive heart. I do not merely pass over the words hurriedly, but I carefully observe what the individual word means. And really, if I do not do this but am preoccupied with other business, I feel a definite loss because of neglect. For God gave the word that we should impress it on

ourselves, as Moses says (Deut. 6:7), and practice it. Without this practice our souls become rusty, as it were, and we lose ourselves” (Plass, *What Luther Says*, #365). As we carefully draw the knife over the stone again and again for whetting it, to make it the sharpest possible, so we are to pour over the Word of God again and again to make ourselves the sharpest we possibly can. This applies to our children also.

From time to time we hear a parent lament the fact that its child has gone astray. Our Lord tells us, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). Train up, *chanak*, has the primary meaning to make narrow. It would not be wrong to say that we want to give a child a closed mind to the lies of the devil. This word is also translated “dedicate.” It is the purpose of having family devotion to dedicate ourselves and our children to the Lord. Notice the wonderful promise that is given to those who commit themselves to this task. “When he is old, he will not depart (*sur*, to turn aside, to turn away) from it.” Note the idea of staying on the narrow way.

All of the purposes for having family devotion tend to lead one to sanctification, bringing a person to faith, strengthening that faith, keeping one in that faith, and bringing forth fruits of that faith.

### **The Need**

“We need Christian training because of the nature of us and the nature of the influences, many of them quite unreligious, under which we grow up” (*The Abiding Word*, II, p. 630). The way we are by nature has determined our need for family devotion. “That which is born of flesh is flesh” (John 3:6). We “were by nature the children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3). We “Were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:7, 8). “I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5) has to be confessed by all of us. We were all born with sin. That in itself is enough to point out to us our need to have family devotion.

The original sin that we are born with has also effected our lives. “The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies” (Ps. 58:3). All humans are sinful and do sinful things. To lead them on the path of righteousness we need family devotion. All of the people that are born into this world have a soul that is supposed to eventually go to heaven. This is what God wants. When parents hold their little one in their arms, they are holding one of the most valuable possessions that God has given. To recall the words of the president of our district who was commenting on a parent’s reaction to having a child, “This is our most valuable possession. All of the things of the world have to be left behind. But we can take this child with us to heaven.” Even though we all are by nature the children of wrath, yet, through the hearing of the Word of God we are and can be brought to faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (I John 2:15). Not only do we have a sinful flesh to contend with. We also have the world to contend with. How often does it not happen that we are overcome with frustration as we look back upon the day? Harsh words were said to a loved one. Colleagues seemed annoying. The news was bad. The world outlook wasn’t too encouraging. Why do we Christians feel this way from time to time? We know that it is not a matter of having gotten out of the wrong side of the bed in the morning. The trouble is that the world gets in our way of enjoying the peace we have with God. It has been said that a Christian who starts his day without first turning to God in prayer and to His Word for truth and

guidance has taken a sure step toward a day of frustration and ineffectiveness. The god of this world has so often led us to believe that Jesus should have said, "Lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth." The truth of the matter is that what a man sows, that he reaps. They that sow to the wind, shall reap the whirlwind (Hos. 8:7). We sow in our minds and hearts the things of this world, events of the day, music, weather, dress, entertainment, etc. But these things shall pass away. We need to sow in our minds such things which will not pass away. The world is very treacherous. It would trick us to believe in its passing values. But it is all vanity, hollow, empty. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men" (Col. 2:8).

The devil is also "walking about seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. 5:8). Paul warned the Ephesians and us, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil...Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (6:11-17). We are only kidding ourselves when we think that since Jesus overcame the devil when He was tempted in the wilderness, we do not have to worry about being tempted by the devil now. Eve had the sure Word of God. The devil led her to doubt it. "Hath God said?" That question is constantly ringing in our ears also. Do we have a need for family devotion? That question is rather redundant.

Commenting on Deuteronomy 6:6 Luther said, "Moses does not say: Simply teach these words, and recite them to your children. By the expression 'Thou shalt diligently teach them' he indicates what sort of fellows we are. It is not enough merely to direct and admonish...for our heart is dull, hardened, and rusted; and the Word does not stick to it. The heart soon falls away from the Word; this is why we must ever be drilling it. Otherwise the heart is disgusted at this food and soon becomes tired of it, nay, wants to be master before it has become a pupil. Therefore perseverance is always necessary for the people entrusted to us preachers; it enables them to learn the Word better" (Plass # 4802).

### **The Form**

Now let us turn to the practical side of the family devotion. It might be well for us to look at the order of service in the Lutheran Hymnal to see what form the family devotion should take. By form we mean what order a person observes in the devotion and not what body positions are assumed in the devotion. As we consider the worship service that we observe on the congregational level we should keep in mind that God has not determined any order of service for us. In the book of Acts we read, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (2:42). We are free to choose what order we want to follow. As we consider the order of service that we follow in our congregation, we note some of the following: hymns, prayers, readings from Scripture, confessions, invocations, and other forms of singing. It would be useless to set up an order of devotional service for the home in this paper since there are so many variations that can be followed. These variations would be due partly to the purpose of the family devotion and also to the participants in the family devotion.

Following the form that is found in most meditation books we would suggest as a bare minimum a reading from part of Scripture, a meditation on that portion of Scripture, and a prayer. In private devotions a person may meditate on part of what he read by himself. When

there is more than one person involved in the devotion, and that is our consideration with family worship, it is suggested that the portion of Scripture that is read also be discussed. The discussion might refer to facts in the lesson, or it might refer to the application of the lesson to our lives today. The purpose of family devotion is not only to learn Bible facts. It is important for us to know what God is saying to us, not only to the Children of Israel.

A hymn might be used in the devotion. A small family might hesitate to sing a hymn in their devotion. But it has been done. Keep in mind that hymns are prayers. They do not have to be sung. They can be read in part or in their entirety if desired. They aid in the worship of the Lord. We might also recall the disciples when they celebrated the Lord's Supper. "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Matt. 26:30). We can also "teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Col. 3:16).

Prayers are an important part of the family devotion. Often the devotion is closed with a prayer, even the Lord's Prayer. Your essayist remembers closing the devotions that his father led with the Aaronic blessing in prayer form. From time to time a chain prayer might be said.

### **Materials to be Used**

The first book that we have to begin with in the worship in the family is the Bible. Jesus said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39). A person would do well to heed this imperative. The trouble with most of us is that we do not like to do this searching (*ereunaō*, from *erō*, to ask, to seek, to inquire). We are happy to have others do the searching for us. We are content to have others tell us what the words we have read mean and how they apply to our lives. Devotion books are fine. But they can be misused as well as commentaries can be misused. They are no substitute for the family searching the writings of Scripture by the holy men of God.

Another basic book that can be used in family devotion is a devotion book or meditation book. These can be used with great benefit to the user. Their abuse has been stated. (Keep in mind that whatever a person uses in his family devotion, whether it be the Bible, a devotion book, a prayer book, and hymnal, a chart to read the Bible or portions of it, whatever might be used, it is important to keep in mind the purpose of the family devotion. That purpose has been stated in the title of this paper, namely, worship in the home. Recall the other purposes of the family devotion as stated in the paper. When a person stops attaining these goals, the materials he is using to attain these goals might just as well be discarded.) The value of a devotion book is that it can help the person think about situations that apply to him which he might have overseen in his own reading without a devotion. Another benefit of such a devotion book is that it helps the reader select certain passages in an orderly fashion. This gives direction to his reading. Many of the readings in a devotion book are patterned after the church year so one can follow the sequence through the year in an orderly fashion.

A prayer book is also a useful tool in the family devotion. It has been suggested by religious leaders that it is not good to let a person say a prayer without reading it when others are present. The reason is because a person might tend to ramble and not think of what is being said, or there might be too many disconnected thoughts or pauses in such a prayer. If one uses this type of reasoning, it would be very good to have a prayer book handy for the family devotion. Many devotion books have short prayers at the end of the meditation. Some have prayers at the end of the book also. Another value of the prayer book is that it teaches us how to pray for gifts that we would otherwise forget. When praying out of our hearts, we often find ourselves

repeating, perhaps unaware that we are doing it, “Gi’me.” Prayer also includes thanksgiving and praise to our gracious Lord.

In some families prayers out of the heart are used frequently. At times one member of the family says one part and the next member of the family adds his or her part. When prayers out of the heart are used, it might be helpful to have a calendar on which certain items can be listed to be included in the prayer for that day. Such events or items could include church year events, important dates concerning the family such as anniversaries, birthdays, school functions, etc. The names of people might also be placed on such a calendar so that one remembers one’s spouse, parents, children, teachers, pastors, employees, employers, government officials, etc.

When considering what type of prayers to use in the family devotion, don’t overlook the Lord’s Prayer and Luther’s morning and evening prayers. The Lutheran Hymnal has already been mentioned as useful in the family devotion. Hymns are prayers set to music. They can aid us in our worship of the Lord Jesus I am afraid that the use of the hymnal in family devotions is greatly neglected.

When there are children in the family that can participate in the family devotion, one could use discussion in the devotion, asking the child what the reading meant to the child. With small children it would be best to ask questions about the content of the story. With older children questions about how this applies to the life of the child could be asked. Discussion does not have to be limited to families with children, however. One spouse could discuss the story with the other spouse.

What translation should be used has caused difficulty in some families. There have been complaints from time to time about not being able to understand what is being said by the Lord as one reads the Bible. This is particularly true when one reads the Old Testament. One of the reasons for this difficulty is unfamiliarity. The more reading one does in the Bible, the more familiar he will become with the meaning of the different passages in the Bible. Another reason for having difficulties when reading the Bible, particularly the A.V., is the use of words that have unfamiliar meanings. “Prevent” (I Thess. 4:15) does not mean to hinder. We would ask when told, “We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep,” “Prevent them from what?” “Prevent” means “precede” in that passage. When Peter tells us that we are “peculiar” (II Pet. 2:9), he does not mean that we are odd. “But ye are, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people” tells us that we have been purchased. We are owned by God. “Suffer the little children to come unto Me” is a gracious invitation extended to our little ones by the Lord (Mark 10:14). He does not want them to suffer when He said these words. He wants the parents to allow the little children to come to Him and not to forbid them to come. It might be helpful to use devotional readings that are taken from another translation. Some families use Bible History books that are written on a certain level for the family devotion. Others might have the A.V. along with another translation such as the New International Version. Again, one should consider the purpose of the family devotion when deciding what translation to use. You can drive a nail with a hammer. You can also drive a nail with a shovel. Which would be more useful to accomplish the intended purpose?

## **The Time**

“With the Lord begin thy task,” the hymnwriter tells us. “Ev’ry morn with Jesus rise, And when day is ended, In His name then close thine eyes.” In His Word, God does not give us any directives as to the best time to have family devotions. The time of day is left to our discretion. We might say on the basis of the words, “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” that anytime would be a good time for having the family devotion.

Having it in the morning has the benefit of carrying the Lord’s Word with one the whole day. When troubles arise during the day, one might remember the Word that was studied earlier that day. One problem that might arise, however, is that it might be a little difficult to get the family together at this time of day. If the family is together in the evening, it would be best to have the family devotion in the evening. One can have private devotions in the morning when one arises or in the evening before going to bed. The best time to have the family devotion is when the family is together.

## **Hindrances**

Some hindrances have already been hinted at. The devil, the world, and our flesh are some of the greatest hindrances. These unholy three will pose a constant threat to our family devotions. They will throw all kinds of excuses at us for not having them. Some of these are listed here so that we recognize them and are able to deal with them. This list is by no means complete.

One of the most common reasons for neglecting family devotions and for that matter, the Word of God altogether is, “I am too busy.” “I don’t have the time.” The truth of the matter is that we have time for what we take time. When people say that they are too busy for the family devotion, they are too busy...with unimportant things.

It seems that it is hard to get families together. In some cases both parents are working, often on alternate shifts. The activities that our youth have in the schools keep them moving much of the time. Our social calendars are filled with events to keep us gone most of the week. Home has become a place where one sleeps, eats, gets the mail, and from time to time sees the family. The T.V., radio, and hi-fi are often the intruders to the family devotion.

From time to time company comes for a day or so. It often happens that this is used as a reason to drop the family devotion. The company could be invited to share in the devotion.

One danger to the family devotion is that it can become a performance rather than worship. The devil would like to have us believe that we are fulfilling our list of good deeds for the day by partaking in a family devotion. “Come on. Let’s have it and get it over with for the day,” can become our attitude. Then working with God’s Word and having one’s faith strengthened through that word becomes a chore instead of the joy that it is meant to be. A man whose tongue is parched and whose mouth has cotton balls in it joyfully drinks of the water that is offered. Such should be our attitude when we draw from the waters of life. Worshipping Jesus should never be a chore. We are to find great joy in being able to daily come to our Lord with our requests and to listen to Him as He speaks to us in His Word.

Some people approach the Bible with the idea that they have done their duty by learning their Bible History facts. It is important to know certain facts from the Bible. Doctrines are based on facts. If these facts are not applied to the individual so that he is drawn closer to the Lord and Savior, then it would seem that that person has put a great deal of time into performance and little or none into worship.

These are some of the hindrances to family worship. Would that we could note them all so that when the devil would lead us to neglect the family devotion, we would be able to recognize his trickery and oppose him. But when we would have them all listed, the devil would be sure to find another reason for neglecting them.

“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Col. 3:15)

### **Seven Reasons for Family Worship**

1. It will enrich the life of the family and make the home fit for the presence of the unseen *guest!*
2. It will encourage tolerance and understanding and put *faith* in the place of friction.
3. It will bring across the threshold an *infallable guide* for the youth of the *home*, to give their lives meaning and direction.
4. It will send us forth to the day's work in utter cheerfulness, dedicating the day to the *glory of God!*
5. It will so *strengthen* us against suffering, sorrow, and frustration that nothing the world can do to us can hurt us.
6. It will reinforce the work of the church, church school, and give a *Christ* for all week.
7. It will bring the consciousness of a family in unity in God, a new dependence on *His* fatherhood, a new sense of the unity and our love for all mankind.

### **Some Things We Should Avoid**

1. Don't wait for a more favorable time; begin now.
2. Don't let other matters become more important at worship time.
3. Don't let the family devotion be haphazard; plan them.
4. Don't be discouraged; good things take time.
5. Don't be too formal; God made, the family informal.
6. Don't let the world intrude; control that radio and TV set.
7. Don't resolve to begin sometime; things postponed are often forgotten.
8. Don't stop when company comes; they need the Bread of Life too.

### **General Suggestions**

1. Plan the worship to meet the needs of the family.
2. Keep before you the great purposes of the Scriptures, II Tim. 3:15-17.
3. Let it be understood that family worship is not a substitute for private prayer and Bible reading.
4. Arrange the time to suit the family; if the whole family cannot be together regularly, vary the time to reach all as often as possible; try to have the family circle complete at least once a week. If only once a week is possible, plan especially well.
5. Aside from that, regularity is important; we take time for that which we are accustomed to do regularly.
6. Normally the father is head of the household; he should take and keep the leadership, even if other members of the family share in the actual participation.
7. Include the guests under the roof; let it be known that you have family worship; occasionally invite another family to join you in worship, especially if they have no family devotion.
8. Keep the length of the devotion to a convenient minimum; family worship is not a substitute for the church service.