

Ways of Having

Family Worship

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Josh. 24:15).

The acts of worship most appropriate to the family are (1) the use of Scripture, (2) prayer, and (3) song. Care must be taken that the worship is really a family worship; that is, such as offers an opportunity for the children to express to God the adoration, love, and trust which rise out of their own growing needs and capacities.

Because families usually gather for the morning and evening meals, family worship might most easily be held before or after breakfast, or before or after the evening meal. It may be better to gather in the living room, where there is less disorder than in the dining room or den. However, your family schedule probably differs from others; simply try to arrange a time when everyone can be present on a regular basis. Be flexible.

Remember four general principles which ought to be observed in the worship of families in which there are children:

1. The worship program should be brief. The attention of young children cannot be held for very long.
2. Variety is needed. Variations which provide fresh and interesting ways of expressing the family adoration, love, and trust toward God will make your devotional season more vital to the children.
3. Participation of every member of the family is important. There must be opportunity for every person to share actively in the worship.
4. Adapt your worship program to the needs and capacities of the youngest participant. Its spirit should be essentially a spirit of childlike trust.

The Use of Song

Children love to sing. The use of song is a vital element in successful family worship. Remember:

1. In families in which there are young children, children's hymns and choruses ought to be sung part of the time. Choose choruses wisely, making sure that the tunes are appropriate and that the lyrics are scriptural. Some excellent "Scripture choruses" are now available wherein the words of a Bible passage have been set to music.
2. The great hymns of the church should be used. Even small children should be given the opportunity to learn and love the great hymns which Christians have found to be a blessing and most suitable for their expressions of praise, love, and trust. (A hymnal which includes the very best hymns as well as songs for informal occasions is the *Trinity Hymnal*, which may be ordered from Great Commission Publications, 7401 Old York Road, Philadelphia, PA 19126.)

The Use of Scripture

No program of worship is complete without the use of God's own Words, the Scriptures. A good way to secure variety and participation is for the father and mother to recite some suitable passage of Scripture. Sometimes, instead of repeating the whole passage, each member of the family may contribute a verse or verses.

The passages may also be read. As a general practice the reading of Scripture at family worship should be participated in by all. It is most fitting for the head of the family to read the passage, but on special occasions reading may be delegated to a child. Try reading some of the easier passages in unison, responsively, or verses turn about.

Sometimes Bible memory passages may be assigned. The passage then will be recited and discussed as the theme or text for that particular program of worship.

Use one or more of the new Bible translations. The King James Version (KJV) is still the most widely used translation, and its language is most beautiful and majestic. However, there are several excellent translations available that render the original languages into modern English. The New American Standard Bible (NASB) is a popular translation, faithful to the Greek and Hebrew, which has almost entirely replaced the KJV in collegiate ranks. The recently published New International Version of the New Testament (NIV) is thought by many Bible students to be "the best yet" and is expected finally to replace the KJV. Translators are presently working on the Old Testament portion. The NIV is a splendid version, quite readable, and true to the original languages. One of the most popular versions, but a dangerous one in the opinion of many Bible-believing scholars and students, is *The Living Bible*, a paraphrased edition of the Scriptures by Kenneth Taylor. *The Living Bible* is not a true translation, but a paraphrase which seeks to set forth the *meaning* of the words of Scripture rather than to give an exact translation from the original

languages. The Revised Standard Version (RSV) is generally a good translation, but it cannot be recommended without reservation because of several misleading or erroneous renderings.

Wise parents will also encourage memorization and discussion of a catechism. Christians have used the catechetical method of teaching since New Testament times. The Westminster Shorter Catechism is especially helpful as a summary of Bible doctrine. Younger children will profit from "The Child's Catechism." (Both catechisms may be secured from the Christian Education Committee, 1020 Monticello Ct., Montgomery, AL 36109. A brief explanation of the Shorter Catechism, with questions for discussion, may also be purchased at the same address. Just ask for "Studies in the Catechism.")

Prayer

Prayer in the family must be sincere (Matt. 6:5). Sincerity is necessary to true prayer of every kind, whether secret or social.

Prayer in the family must be reverent (Matt. 6:9). Help your children understand that when they pray they are in the very presence of the living God. Encourage them to develop the practice of private Bible reading and prayer.

Prayer in the family should be brief and simple (Matt. 6:7). This is particularly true where there are young children. This is not the time for long, flowery, "pulpit" prayers!

Prayer in the family should be adapted to the needs and capacities of the members of the family. Remember that God has invited us to pray about everything (Phil. 4:6). God wants to hear about financial needs, sore toes, a school party, the health of a pet, a family trip.

The head of the family is the natural leader of the family in prayer. He should prepare himself spiritually so that he can interpret the true needs of every member of his family to God.

Remember: That all worship, if it is to be "worship in spirit and in truth," must be in the Name of Jesus Christ. Through your daily family devotions every member of your family should be challenged to receive Christ Jesus as Saviour and to submit to Him as Lord of all of life. From fellowship about God's Word and His throne each member of the family should go out to share with others God's gracious gift of salvation.

I will walk within my house with a perfect heart (Ps. 102:2).

— P.G.S.