

2014

Creating Exciting Family Worship

S. Joseph Kidder

Andrews University, kiddersj@andrews.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/christian-ministry-pubs>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kidder, S. Joseph, "Creating Exciting Family Worship" (2014). *Faculty Publications*. Paper 49.
<http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/christian-ministry-pubs/49>

This Contribution to Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Christian Ministry at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

Creating Exciting Family Worship

S. JOSEPH KIDDER

62

HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE. LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH. THESE COMMANDMENTS THAT I GIVE YOU TODAY ARE TO BE ON YOUR HEARTS. IMPRESS THEM ON YOUR CHILDREN. TALK ABOUT THEM WHEN YOU SIT AT HOME AND WHEN YOU WALK ALONG THE ROAD, WHEN YOU LIE DOWN AND WHEN YOU GET UP.
DEUTERONOMY 6:4-7 (NIV)

“IF EVER THERE WAS A TIME WHEN EVERY HOUSE SHOULD BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER, IT IS NOW.”
ELLEN G. WHITE¹

Family Worship is the regular, intentional gathering as a family unit to worship God by reading scripture, praying, singing praise, and finding ways to be involved in ministry and evangelism together. There are four major components to every family worship: “Read – Pray – Sing – Mission.”² Every Christian family should have such time daily.

Although Barna’s research shows that 85% of parents believe they are primarily

responsible for the moral and spiritual development of their children³, among “churched” families, fewer than 10% read the Bible, pray (outside of meals), or participate in an act of service as a family in a typical week. One out of twenty have a family worship experience outside of church in a typical month⁴. Among active SDA members, 40% of families never have worship at home⁵, 27% have worship on a daily basis⁶; 33% have family worship once a week.⁷

Gather the whole family at least one time this week and have family worship. “Read – Pray – Sing – Mission.” If this is new for the family, keep it very simple. Sit in a circle. **Read** a few Bible verses (Luke 19:1-10), a parent can lead a short **prayer**, and a simple **song** (such as “Jesus Loves Me”).

Worship of the Lord is first vertical—connecting with God through prayer, worship, and Bible study—then horizontal—connecting with people through ministry and evangelism beginning in the home, involving the whole family (Matthew 22:37-39).

In the remaining part of this article I will give the purpose of family worship and some practical suggestions and methods for family worship. These ideas and examples are gleaned from interviews conducted with 21⁸ families regarding the best way to have family worship.

S. Joseph Kidder, DMin, is Professor of Biblical Spirituality at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA.

I. What Is the Purpose of Family Worship?

There are many purposes for family worship. Below are the major ones:

First, to worship God together and learn more of His ways. Children should learn to worship God in their early years so that they might develop love and respect for Him in their later years. They need to learn how to relate to Him and to realize that He is the loving Creator, the Lord, the Savior, holy, and deserves to be honored in all that they say and do. “Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). The worship of God is beneficial for all ages. It brings the family closer together with each other and God.

Second, to honor God’s Word, develop respect for it, and live by it. James says, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22). Furthermore, Jesus said, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4). Home is a good place to practice this exhortation, “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” (Colossians 3:16). We need to honor the Bible in our homes and teach our children from it.

Third, to assist in the faith development of children. Barna gives the probability of someone accepting Christ as Savior as follows: 32% age 5 – 13; 4% age 14 – 18; 6% age 19 – older.⁹ This makes it imperative that families do everything they can to be intentionally active in the religious upbringing of their children. Barna also notes that only 1/3 of teens surveyed expected to stay in church once they were living on their own¹⁰. Research shows that children whose families are active in their faith development have a higher probability of staying in the church¹¹. It is the desire of parents to have Christian children who will grow up with a commitment to Christ, embrace good moral standards, and become a witness for Christ in the community; children who not only who not only take the church seriously,

but enjoy being part of it. Paul acknowledges the value of knowing the scriptures and living by them from a young age when addressing Timothy:

BUT AS FOR YOU, CONTINUE IN WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED AND HAVE BECOME CONVINCED OF, BECAUSE YOU KNOW THOSE FROM WHOM YOU LEARNED IT, AND HOW FROM INFANCY YOU HAVE KNOWN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, WHICH ARE ABLE TO MAKE YOU WISE FOR SALVATION THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS.
2 TIMOTHY 3:14-15

Fourth, to establish the family in faith, personal convictions, and doctrine. Children, young people, and adults need convictions to stand up for their faith. They must understand their faith and know that it is Bible-based. It is important to know what they what they believe and why. The home makes a good Bible school where the children can be grounded as they face the humanistic, evolutionary philosophy of modern society.

Fifth, to pray over family problems, needs, burdens the children may have so that they may have confidence in the God who answers prayers. All family members have personal needs. It would be good if they could learn to share them openly and take them before the Lord together. There are school needs, relationship problems, character issues such as timidity and fears of all kinds; questions about entertainment, pornography, etc. Teenagers have deep needs and hate to express them for fear of being misunderstood or feeling embarrassed. Their problems are big to them and must be considered. Parents can model taking their needs to God in prayer. All family members need to know that God will hear and answer them, thus building confidence in Him. Children who learn to pray openly at home will have no problem praying publicly in the church or weekly prayer meetings as they grow.

Sixth, to pray and intercede for others with regard to their needs or trials. Praying for the spiritual and physical needs of others helps to shift the focus off of self. It also provides an opportunity for those praying for the Lord to open their hearts

and minds to be more compassionate. This will result in an increased desire for ministry, mission, and evangelism.

Finally, to find relevant and meaningful ways to minister in the church, in the home, and in the world. When a family takes on a project together, it brings the family closer and allows God to use them to bless the world. Here are some examples of ways families can minister: adopting a less fortunate family to pray over and help out during the holidays; hosting a small group, sing and fellowship at nursing homes; help out at a food pantry or sharing food with the homeless; give Bible studies and visit others as a family.

II. Practical Suggestions for Creating an Effective Family Worship Environment

Creating an effective environment for family worship sets the stage for continued thriving worship experiences. One of the most important factors is your own spirituality. If worship is important for you, your children will make it important for themselves. Kids pick up on what is really important to parents. Effective family worship begins by making Jesus a priority in your life. Paul said, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Your family sees what is important to you. If you have a strong relationship with Christ and live His love, others will want to emulate you.

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Search out methods that will appeal to all age levels in the family.** Different ages have different interests and what may appeal to one, will not appeal to another. Vary the methods so as to keep family worship from being boring and routine. Interest for all should be maintained so monotony does not kill it. “Fathers and mothers, make the hour of worship intensely interesting. There is no reason why this hour should not be the most pleasant and enjoyable of the day. A little thought given to preparation for it will enable you to make it full of interest and profit. From time to time let the service be varied.”¹²

2. **Make it a delightful, happy, interesting time filled with enthusiasm so the whole family looks forward to it with expectancy.** Do not make it a time of forced listening to the Bible or of bitter participation while you drone through whole chapters of the Bible beyond family comprehension and then drag the family through a long, dry, routine prayer. If they participate in bitterness, they will abhor family worship.¹³
3. **Do not make it so long that the children despise the time it takes.** Better have it short and sweet, vital and satisfying, so their appetites hunger for more. Always finish before they want you to.
4. **Let all participate and become involved.** Those that can read should take turns in reading as well as in praying. Even the little ones can say a few words in prayer, if they cannot read. Teach songs in which all take part. Take time for discussion, answering questions, solving problems, and self-expression. Children, especially, are inquisitive and want to know.
5. **Do not spend time criticizing or gossiping.** There is nothing that will sour the environment more than tearing something or someone apart. This is not time to air church problems except for matters of prayer. Remember it is worship time.
6. **Let the children that are old enough conduct family worship sometimes, either in whole or in part.** Let them do it their way and express themselves. It will create interest in it for them. This is also a good way to develop them spiritually and in self-confidence. They should be encouraged in what they do or say and not belittled.
7. **Have family worship when it is most convenient for all.** Supper time is usually best, before the various activities of the evening begin.¹⁴

III. Practical Examples and Methods for Inspiring Family Worship

1. **Small section Bible reading.** Rather than reading a whole chapter from the Bible at a time, which may be quite long and hard to retain, do just a paragraph or story a day. Let all family members suggest a title to the paragraph according to its content. Let each one list some things they observe in the paragraph, such as places, people, things, special words, meanings, applications, insights, etc. This can be great fun for children and a real challenge for all. It is like observing things in a room or on an automobile ride. When you have gone through the paragraph like that, then investigate spiritual lessons that may be learned. Let each one make it personal and tell what they have learned for themselves.
2. **The miracles of Christ.** You could do one a night and learn something about Christ from each miracle and especially let each member learn something. Study the miracle as to where it was, the occasion, what happened, who was involved, and then lessons and applications.
3. **Bible characters.** This can be a different kind of study for the sake of variety. Read about the character in the Bible and study his/her weaknesses and strengths. Discuss how you may learn something from the individual. See yourself in Bible characters and learn many practical lessons.
4. **Bible doctrine.** Everyone should know the basic doctrines of the Bible. All family members should be grounded in the truth. You could find the doctrines by means of a good concordance or perhaps from a book on basic doctrines of the Bible.
5. **Bible book study.** Select a book of the Bible appropriate for your children's ages and have each family member read 2-3 verses as you go around the room. You can read anywhere from 1-2 chapters to an entire book, such as Ruth or Philippians, each night. Let the children help choose what book of the Bible to read. Older children can find out its theme, major divisions, lessons, key chapters, and ideas, etc.
6. **Great chapters of the Bible.**¹⁵ One can go through a Bible book chapter-by-chapter. Reading a chapter a day could be done if the children are not too young so they can comprehend it. Learn the key verse in the chapter, get the key word, and break the chapter down into its paragraph parts to find the structure of the chapter. You can also study special promises, see how Christ is seen, look at important doctrine in the chapter, study what sins should be avoided, what things a person should do, and what lessons can be learned.
7. **Major verses.** This is a good method for variety. Take one verse a night for a period of time and scrutinize it as to what it means for each individual. For example, you might take a series of verses on great promises in the Bible, such as on prayer, salvation, victorious living, or Christ's second coming. Try to memorize the verse.
8. **Scripture memorization program.** Even a 3-4 year old can learn ten verses if you select the right ones, and by the time a child is five years old, he can learn Psalm 23. Try it, make it fun, and you will be amazed at what your family can accomplish!
9. **Devotional books for appropriate age levels.** These books are available in most bookstores including ABC Bookstores. They are written for various age levels. Children enjoy these and find them very interesting. Discernment needs to be used in selecting titles. Think about its relevancy to every age group.

- 10. Bible games.** These can be very interesting and add challenge to family worship. They can be appealing to youth and keep family worship from being boring. Use Bible games that teach a lesson and from which you may learn something helpful for Christian living.
- 11. Map study.** The understanding of salvation can be enhanced by an awareness of Biblical geography. Children might enjoy learning where certain countries, rivers, and mountains are; what happened there, such as the law on Mt. Sinai, crossing the Red Sea, and Christ walking on the water. Show them where these things took place and draw some lessons from it.
- 12. Pictures or Videos.** This is a wonderful way to interest children. Many Bible story books have lots of pictures in them that tell a story for the child. This makes the Bible come alive. Use videos that cover Bible events, such as the Exodus or the life of Jesus; use nature videos to show the greatness of God; or use videos of great heroes of faith such as Martin Luther, John Huss, and others to be inspired by their commitment to and love for Jesus.
- 13. Object lessons.** Visual aids of all kinds can be used. Be creative and use whatever object you have handy to teach a Bible truth. Christ readily used object lessons, such as the sheep and goats, rocks, water in the well of Samaria, etc. There is no end to object lessons.
- 14. Read or listen to short biographies of godly servants of Jesus,** missionaries, evangelists, and pastors are a few examples.
- 15. Singing.** You should always sing if possible. Have a songbook for each family member or project the song on the wall. You could also use sites like YouTube and GodVine to find songs to sing along with. Learn great hymns of

the faith. You can also teach from the songs as there are stories behind the hymns if you investigate them. There are many books that will tell you the history and meaning of songs. Some great songs are found in the Bible such as the Psalms and Ephesians 5:19.

- 16. Sermons.** Listen to sermons of famous preachers/evangelists/teachers on CD or the internet. You can even find sermons for children online. The Lord can use His preached Word in the lives of each family member.
- 17. Small groups.** Groups should discuss the Bible story under consideration, then come up with practical ideas of how it applies to life today. The main idea is to learn about God, the Gospel and Godly living.

Conclusion

Anything you do is better than nothing. Be intentional about family worship on a consistent basis. Make it interesting, practical, Christ centered, relevant, and participatory for all.

There will be some common challenges to family worship such as different ages of the children, children that are very young, one parent is “less committed”, parents don’t feel competent to teach the Bible, and children who are resistant or opposed to family worship. But the more you show your love and commitment to Jesus and the more you live the ideals of the Christian life, the more the children will be interested. There is no substitute for you and your life making the greatest impression on your children.

Finally pray for your children and family. Leave them in the hands of God and He will take care of them. “By sincere, earnest prayer parents should make a hedge about their children. They should pray with full faith that God will abide with them and that holy angels will guard them and their children from Satan’s cruel power.”¹⁶ One man told me that he prayed and fasted for his children and grandchildren

every day and claimed them for Jesus. Today all of them are walking with the Lord.

THE PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS PERSON IS
POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE
JAMES 5:16

Notes

- 1 Ellen G. White. *Testimonies to Church* Vol 7 (1902, Pacific Press), 42.
- 2 See Acts 2:42-47. "In all of the Valuegenesis research projects, family helping projects or altruistic activities have been seen as a significant statistical factor in building both a rich and growing faith life and building loyalty to the Seventh-day Adventist church." *Valuegenesis³ Update*, Issues no 4: 2012, 5. hwc.edu.adventistfaith.org/assests/40045. Accessed March 31, 2014.
- 3 George Barna. *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should be Your Church's #1 Priority* (Regal Books, 2003), 77.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 78.
- 5 S. Joseph Kidder. *The Big Four: Secrets to a Thriving Church Family* (Review & Herald, 2011), 128.
- 6 2009 Congregations Study for the North American Division www.cye.org/icm/projects/reports. Accessed March 30, 2014.
- 7 Kidder, 128.
- 8 Seven pastor's families, seven teacher's families, and seven families of lay members.
- 9 George Barna. *Grow Your Church from the Outside In: Understand the Unchurched and How to Reach Them* (Regal Books, Rev Ed, 2002), 45.
- 10 George Barna. *Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture* (Regal Books, 2001), 113.
- 11 Jerry W. Lee, Gail T. Rice, and V Bailey Gillespie. "Family Worship Pattern and Their Correlations with Adolescent Behavior and Beliefs", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1997, 36(3), 373-381.
- 12 White, 43.
- 13 On page 43 of Volume 7 of *Testimonies to the Church*, White says, "The father, or, in his absence, the mother, should conduct the worship, selecting a portion of Scripture that is interesting and easily understood. The service should be short. When a long chapter is read and a long prayer offered, the service is made wearisome, and at its close a sense of relief is felt. God is dishonored when the hour of worship is made dry and irksome, when it is so tedious, so lacking in interest, that the children dread it."
- 14 White also notes, "In every family there should be a fixed time for morning and evening worship. How appropriate it is for parents to gather their children about them before the fast is broken, to thank the heavenly Father for His protection during the night, and to ask Him for His help and guidance and watch care during the day! How fitting, also, when evening comes, for parents and children to gather once more before Him and thank Him for the blessings of the day that is past!" 7T, 43.
- 15 Some examples of "Great Chapters" include, Genesis 1, Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 23, Isaiah 53, Matthew 24, John 3, Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 13, Hebrews 11, and Revelation 22.
- 16 White, 43.