

A photograph of a man with a beard and a mustache, wearing a dark blue polo shirt, sitting and reading an open Bible. He is holding the book with both hands. A young boy with blonde hair, wearing a maroon zip-up jacket, is leaning over his shoulder, looking at the Bible. Another child is partially visible in the background, also looking towards the book. The scene is intimate and focused on family time.

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

– Joshua, son of Nun

FAMILY WORSHIP

"The most powerful choices we will make in our lives are not about specific decisions but about patterns of life."

– Andy Crouch

"I beseech, I entreat, I charge you to begin and continue the worship of God in your families from this day to the close of your lives... Consider family religion not merely as a duty imposed by authority, but as your greatest privilege granted by divine grace."

– Samuel Davies



WHAT IS FAMILY WORSHIP?

Simply put, Family Worship is a daily time together that creates a pattern and practice of putting God at the centre of our homes! Both Scripture and church history show us the importance of intentionally honouring and passing on the ways of the Lord in our homes. Family Worship is for all families—whether you're a newlywed couple, empty nesters, or a family the size of a football team! It consists of **reading** God's word, **praying**, and **singing** together as a family.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL FAMILY WORSHIP:

- You don't need to prepare devotional thoughts or teaching; keep it off the cuff!
- Be brief, be flexible, and be fun! It can be as short as 5-10 minutes.

A QUICK HOW-TO:

READ

Read a passage of Scripture together.

TIP: start at the beginning of a book of the Bible and read a chapter each day. Family age and stage will determine what type of reading best suits your family. More in the 'Getting Started' section.

PRAY

Parent prays (or family members can take turns praying).

TIP: tie in a theme or a verse from the passage you just read.

SING

Sing a song together.

TIP: sing a song or hymn acapella or accompanied by an instrument.

See the **Getting Started page** for more tips and suggestions.

“I agree with Matthew Henry when he says, ‘They that pray in the family do well; they that pray and read the Scriptures do better; but they that pray, and read, and sing do best of all.’ There is a completeness in that kind of family worship which is much to be desired.”

– Charles Spurgeon

WHY FAMILY WORSHIP?



God is worthy of our worship!

Our prayer is that all families at Westside would make reading the Bible, praying, and worshipping God together a regular part of their family life. We believe these are foundational practices of being a Jesus follower, but even the mention of this topic often generates a feeling of discouragement for many. As Christians, we know we should spend time reading, praying, and worshipping as a family, but struggle to find the motivation, courage, or consistent rhythm for our family to engage in this way. Some families do well with daily worship, some are doing their best to fit it in when possible, and some wouldn't know where to start even if they wanted to.

Creating patterns

Underneath it all, we desire to see our spouses and kids thrive in their faith. With our kids specifically, we do not just hope for this while they live with us, but as they launch out into the world as independent adults. The way we structure our homes and the things that capture our attention are building a foundation for our children's futures in profoundly important ways.

In his book *The Tech-Wise Family*, Andy Crouch writes, "The most powerful choices we will make in our lives are not about specific decisions but about patterns of life." Family Worship is a short daily time together that creates a pattern and practice of putting God at the centre of our homes. It will take work and creativity, but it's accessible and realistic for all!

We are good at making time for what we value most

The current of the culture we live in does not naturally flow towards Christ-likeness. Social media, devices, and a million other things are constantly vying for our attention while offering us the hope, rest, peace, and satisfaction they can never deliver. We have to make decisions about what we will make time for and what voices we listen to; will we be conformed to the world, or be transformed by the renewal of our minds as we abide in Jesus (*Rom 12:2*). There is a very real battle going on around us and *for* us.

Daily Family Worship, in addition to the other intentional, but unplanned moments of prayer, conversation, and instruction, allows parents to model a life built on the promises of our creator God who loves us, calls us, and redeems us. (*Deut 6:4-9*)

We are good at making time for what we value most. And God deserves to be worshipped, celebrated, and made much of in our homes.

GETTING STARTED

To make Family Worship a lasting and foundational practice in our family, we must be both convinced of its importance, and wise in setting reasonable expectations. As Joel Beeke writes,

“We trust this avoids two extremes: an idealistic approach that is beyond the reach of even the most God-fearing home, and a minimalist approach that abandons daily family worship because the ideal seems so out of reach.”

The stage of your family and the age of your children (if you have them) will obviously impact and partially dictate what these times will look like. The following section gives a more in-depth look at how Read, Pray, and Sing can be practiced.

If a time of family worship and devotion is brand new to you and you'd like an example of a reading plan, how to pray, and what songs to sing, see the 'Sample Reading Plan' and 'Resources' on pages 7-10.

Read

Read with enthusiasm! Read a passage of Scripture together and work through books of the Bible. If a chapter is too long for little ones, read half a chapter or break it down by headings within a chapter. If there are only little ones in the family, read from a good children's Bible that suits their age (see *Resources* on page 10). If there are a range of children from 3-12 for example, cater primarily to the older children but mix in a children's Bible sometimes as well. Be realistic! This might be a noisy and squirmy time, but remember, you are building a foundation.

When kids of various ages are present, stopping to explain everything they might not understand could take a long time. It's often best to read through the text and then briefly highlight or explain one or two key verses. Remember: the aim of Family Worship is not an in depth Bible study.

If there are questions, wait till the reading is over and then address them or schedule a time to discuss them later. If you don't know the answer to their question, that's ok! It's ok to be honest and say you don't know. If it's just husband and wife present, whether young

married or empty nesters, then taking some time to talk through the passage would be a great way to encourage each other.

Pray

After reading your daily passage, spend a few minutes praying together. A parent/adult can lead or the family members can take turns. You can pray through a Psalm, take requests, or pray however else you'd like.

- It's helpful to tie in a theme or a verse from the passage you just read to show how that can help us, direct us, and encourage us during the day.
- Don't get stuck in a rut! Rotate praying for various people, people groups, missions, and issues connected to the church and current events.
- A great way to end the prayer time is by praying for spiritual protection (Ephesians 6) and for the family to walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh (Galatians 5).
- Use a simple outline like ACTS to help you:

Adoration: Reflecting on God's majesty and character (Psalm 89:15-16, Psalm 145).

Confession: Asking for forgiveness of sin and for not loving and worshipping Him as we ought (1 John 8:9).

Thanksgiving: Thanking God and allowing us to set our hearts on being content (Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Supplication: Asking and bringing all our concerns and requests before Him (1 Peter 5:7, Matthew 7:11).

Sing

Sing a song together with joy and enthusiasm! You can sing acapella, or accompanied by someone playing an instrument. Maybe sing a Psalm to a made-up tune. Try to add new songs slowly so that the family can get to know the words to them. Try to choose ones that have good theological content—not just fun ones (see Resource page for some recommended songs). Try not to use recorded music as your primary means of singing together during family worship.

TIPS FOR MAKING IT ENDURE



Be Brief

Aim for 5-10 minutes with young children. As previously mentioned, it may be more realistic to read a paragraph of a chapter rather than an entire chapter. Go longer with older children and teens if they are engaging. The goal is to establish a foundation and daily practice to build upon. It's better to do shorter times of family worship daily than longer times occasionally.

Be Consistent

It would be ideal to begin doing family worship every day at the same time when everyone can make it. We recommend around the breakfast or dinner table, or another time your family is usually together. If everyday seems like an overwhelming goal, start doing it every other day with the goal of getting to daily practice.

Be Flexible

There will be times where you have to move things around. Try not to abandon time altogether for that day but try to be creative and get it in another way. Be willing to bend to help all family members be present. Find a time when most people can make it.

Be Engaging

Read, pray, and sing with excitement and expectation. Don't be stuffy in your approach. Engage the kids in a fun way but without distracting from what you're trying to accomplish. For example, read with enthusiasm and use some character voices if reading with small kids. The last thing you want is for this time to be a legalistic drag. Jerry Owen wrote,

“My biggest concern for parents [that] are gung-ho on family worship is the tendency for it to be very serious and therefore unengaging and often no fun for the kids. This means that the most spiritual time the family spends together, supposedly the most important, the time spent talking and learning about God, is in fact the time that is least like experiencing Him.”

Be Intentional

Tie what you learned from your Scripture reading into prayer and conversations through the rest of the day. Show how it applies to the things we are dealing with during day-to-day life!

IS THIS REALLY POSSIBLE? I'D LOVE TO BUT...



Changing situations, conflicting schedules, and various other demands will forever be a part of family life. What if daily Family Worship doesn't seem realistic and attainable for our particular situation?

I lack the desire to lead my family in worship

Pray for God to give you the desire. We want to be leading and giving out of a heart that is being filled by God. Commit to praying and ask people for help. God's power is made perfect in our weakness!

On this important point, Tom Ascol wrote specifically to husbands and dads:

"I would encourage husbands and dads to resist with all of their strength every tendency to justify not leading their family in regular times of worship. No excuse is acceptable. If you have God's Word and God's Spirit, then no matter how inadequate you feel, you have what it takes to go forward in this area. Every thought that would suggest you are not qualified or that you are exempt is from the pit of hell. Declare war on your pride, humble yourself, and make a serious attempt for one month to lead your family in this way. Don't be afraid to seek counsel and encouragement from other men. The opportunity is too great and the stakes are too high to neglect this responsibility." –Tom Ascol

We don't have time

This is not always easy! As mentioned before, we make time for what we value most. Likely, it's not that there isn't time for Family Worship; it's that we've chosen to spend time on other things. Prioritize and model the importance of this time to your family. Our mission as spouses and parents is to raise families that love God and love others. We can't let anything, as good as it might be, hinder us in this pursuit! It will take creativity and perseverance. And remember that it is okay to start small.

Our schedules are conflicting

Sometimes schedules don't line up due to shift work or class times, etc. Do the best you can, as often as you can. Sometimes, though, there is a need to simplify our schedules. There is a difference between schedule conflict and taking on less important activities and commitments that clutter schedules and minimize time for Family Worship. It takes intentionality, wisdom, and discernment. Carry on with the members of the family that can make it.

One of the parents is not a Christian

In this very real situation, the believing parent should make every effort to establish a time of Family Worship and invite their spouse to join. They might be very happy to participate, or they might choose not to.

IS THIS REALLY POSSIBLE? I'D LOVE TO BUT...



Timothy, a leader in the Ephesian church, was born to a Jewish mother and Greek father. These faithful women did well in teaching Timothy the ways of the Lord. In 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul writes, *“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.”*

I am a single parent

As we’ve said before, family worship only takes two! So whether you’re a single father or a single mother, you have the great privilege to train and lead your child(ren). You also have the community of believers around you that you can invite into becoming a part of your children’s lives if it’s not already happening.

Our children are too young

It only takes a husband and wife to begin family worship. Add the children in as soon as they can follow along with a picture Bible. The point is to make this a regular rhythm of your home that your children grow into. How beautiful for them if they can’t remember a time of not doing this together as a family.

It’s too late to start now

It’s never too late to start, even if the kids are not interested. Begin with a simple conversation acknowledging that you’ve come to recognize this as an important part of loving God as a family and that you would love for them to join you. If you’re an empty nester, start this rhythm thinking about the influence you can still have on your adult kids and grandchildren.

I don’t know how to lead my family in worship

Use the sample pages and resources listed here and start out simple. You could also ask another parent or someone from the church for help as you grow in this area.

SAMPLE READING PLAN

Going through books of the Bible is a great way to start reading God's Word as a family. Read a chapter a day or break up the chapters if you have really little ones.

Mark (16 chapters)

Acts (28 chapters)

Jonah (4 chapters)

Psalm 119 (broken into 10 days)

- v 1-16
- v 17-32
- v 33-48
- v 49-64
- v 65-80
- v 81-104
- v 105-120
- v 121-136
- v 137-152
- v 153-176

Psalm 1

Psalm 16

Psalm 23

Psalm 24

Psalm 27

Psalm 73

Psalm 139

Galatians (6 chapters)

Ephesians (6 chapters)

Philippians (4 chapters)

Colossians (4 chapters)

Ruth (4 chapters)

...Now pick another book and keep going!

SAMPLE DAY

Read

Read Mark 1 together.

Pray

Parent prays:

“Thank you Jesus for the gift of a new day! You are so good and worthy of our praise and our worship. Your greatness is unsearchable and you created all the amazing things around us! Help us to pray along with the Psalmist “Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.” We praise you for the gift of salvation freely given through Jesus.

And we acknowledge that we have not loved you as we ought, that we have sinned against you in our thoughts, words and actions. Forgive us for our sins, for worshipping created things, and create in us clean hearts and restore to us the joy of your salvation! Please incline our hearts to obedience for we know that there is great joy in walking in your ways! Holy Spirit, please fill us with your presence and cause our hearts to overflow with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Thank you for your word that teaches and encourages us. And we know that you have called us by name to follow you just as we read about in Mark 1 today. Help us to surrender fully to you and thank you for the promise that your grace is sufficient for us today, no matter what we face!

Jesus, we pray for the church, for our country and the people of the world in this time of the pandemic and great civil unrest. Would you help us to be people of justice and compassion and mercy? Show us where we have prejudice, bias, or favouritism, and forgive us for not loving as we should. Good and sovereign God, bring good out of the darkness! We know what the enemy has meant for evil you have meant for good!

Father, protect us from the lies of the enemy and remind us of the truth of your Word throughout the day. Thank you for this family and help us to love you and love one another in all we do. May we shine the light of Christ to those around us. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen!”

Sing

Sing a song together: *Amazing Grace*

Sing acapella, or have someone in the family play guitar, piano, or any other instrument you might have! Singing along to prerecorded music is good to mix in as well if you want to, but try not to primarily use recorded music.

*Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind but now I see*

*’Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear
And Grace, my fears relieved
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed*

*Through many dangers, toils and snares
We have already come
T’was Grace that brought us safe thus far
And Grace will lead us home
And Grace will lead us home*

*Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now am found
Was blind but now I see*

RESOURCES

BOOKS ON FAMILY WORSHIP

Family Worship

By Donald S. Whitney

Rediscovering Family Worship

By Jerry Marcellino

Family Worship

By Joel R. Beeke

BIBLES

The Big Picture Story Bible

By Helm and Schoonmaker (ages 2-7)

I Am: 40 Reasons to Trust God

By Diane Stortz (ages 4-8)

The Jesus Storybook Bible:

Every Story Whispers His Name

By Sally Lloyd-Jones (4-8)

The Action Bible

(illustrated like a comic book, ages 9-12)

The ESV Grow Bible

(ages 8-12)

The ESV Study Bible

(teen and adult)

CATECHISM

The New City Catechism for kids

DEVOTIONALS

Dinner Table Devotions & Discussion Starters by Nancy Guthrie

READING PLAN (AGES 6-12)

Exploring the Bible: A Bible Reading Plan for Kids by David Murray

MUSIC

[Westside Worship Spotify Playlist](#)

[Sparkle. Pop. Rampage.](#)

Album by Rend Co. Kids

[Sing: Creation Songs](#)

Album by Ellie Holcomb

[Sing: Remembering Songs](#)

Album by Ellie Holcomb

[Jesus Kids](#)

Album by Shai Linne

Westside Kids Action Worship Videos

[Password: WCHURCHKIDS]

- [The Word](#)
- [Rejoice](#)
- [How Great Thou Art](#)
- [In Tenderness](#)
- [Made Alive](#)
- [New Creations](#)
- [Praise Him](#)
- [Shout to the Lord](#)
- [Before the Throne](#)

Songs & Hymns

- [Amazing Grace](#)
- [How Great Thou Art](#)
- [Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery](#)
- [All Glory Be To Christ](#)
- [Before the Throne of God](#)
- [Come Thou Fount](#)
- [How Deep the Father's Love For Us](#)
- [Nothing But the Blood](#)
- [Doxology](#)
- [Create In Me A Clean Heart](#)
- [Holy, Holy, Holy](#)