

Family Worship

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[0:00] The number one question that I get as a pastor is, can you see when people fall asleep when you're preaching?

! Yes, yes, I can. I hope that suffices as a warning.

Maybe you've heard of D.A. Carson. Maybe you haven't. D.A. Carson is a very well-known, well-respected New Testament scholar.

The rumor is that he has the New Testament memorized in Greek. He's a hero, a model, so to speak, for theology nerds all over the world.

One time, my roommate in college went up to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School where Carson works, and he stood outside Carson's door and had his picture taken with a door.

[1:07] And so he's a model for many on what it means to be a godly Christian scholar.

But you know where he learned how to pray? You know where he learned how to take the Word of God seriously? It wasn't at seminary.

It wasn't when he was earning his doctorate or anything like that. It was at home. It was at home.

Listen to what he said recently at a conference. And forgive, this is a longer quote, but I think it is very insightful and carries a lot of instruction for us.

This is what he said. I learned to pray by listening to my parents pray in family devotions. Learning to pray and reading the Bible during family devotions was all part of growing up.

In our family, from the earliest days I can remember, from the earliest days I can remember, we had family devotions. During devotions, it was our habit for each person to read a verse.

[2:13] Mom always started, and all the rest of us read around. It didn't matter how long or short the verse was or how many names it had in it. If you were old enough to repeat anything, then one of the others gave the verse to you line by line so that you participated too.

Just because you were two and you couldn't read yet didn't mean you didn't participate. And then, if you came from a strong Christian home, you remember other things.

My father was a preacher, and I can remember him preaching to vast crowds of 25 people. After church on Sunday, we would, as a family, sing through various hymns and Christian songs, and then eventually the kids played their instruments, forming a little Baptist combo while the dinner was being made.

And after dinner, we would play family games. But every once in a while, Dad wouldn't be there, and I would go looking for him. And more than once I found him on his knees in tears in front of his chair in his study, interceding with God for the people to whom he had just preached, all 25 of them. No one taught me to do that except by the modeling, which is everything. So, family singing, family worship, family Bible reading, that is what I want to talk to you about today.

[3:38] It's an aspect of spirituality, and that's the series that we're in in these afternoons. And so, let me ask you parents, whether your children are younger or older, are you doing what Tom and Elizabeth Carson did?

Are you showing your children that God is everything? Not just saying it, but showing that to them, modeling it to them. That he's everything to me.

He's everything to this family. He's everything. And my thesis, my position, my argument, is the only way that we can do that is to have daily family worship.

The only way that you can show your children that God really is everything, that it's all about him, that it's not our party, that it's his party, is to do that by having family worship.

And so, I have three points today. They're fairly simple. The first point is the biblical basis for family worship. The second point is why you should do family worship. And the third point is some simple directions on how to do that.

[4:52] And before I get into this, I want to say that this is very, this is a subject that I care a lot about.

I really want you to get this. If you're not doing family worship right now, I hope that you will start after this. And then, if you are doing it, I hope you'll be encouraged to keep doing it.

Someone said the goal of the Christian ministry is to convict the comfortable and to comfort the convicted. And so, if you are comfortable here, not having family worship, to be honest, I hope you are miserable after this.

That the Holy Spirit makes you miserable until you start. And I say that not because I want you to be miserable, but because I love you. And I think God is worthy of your family worship.

And so, that leads us to our first point, the biblical basis of family worship. What does the Bible say about it? Well, a few things. A few things that show us that family worship is necessary, that it's vital.

[6:06] The first thing is, and this relates to what we saw last Sunday morning, that it's all about God. Everything is all about God. And that means simply that your family was created to be all about God.

And if you don't think so, try to find some biblical argument to show me that your family is somehow the exception to that. That your family is the exception to the fact that everything that exists is for God and for His glory.

So, right from the very beginning, I think the Bible lays a very clear foundation that says that if your families exist to worship and glorify God, then it only makes sense that you have regular, purposeful times where you're about the business of worshiping God.

Everything is for God's glory. And so that means your family is for God's glory. So that includes my family, and it includes your family.

There's no exceptions. Well, what else does the Bible say? Are there any explicit commands that say that you should have family worship? A lot of people say, as an excuse, and not as a reason, they say, well, you know, there's no place where it explicitly says that you should have family worship.

[7:36] And I think the answer to that is, I think you're wrong. I think the Bible does explicitly say that you should have family worship. So turn in your Bibles to Joshua chapter 24.

Joshua chapter 24. And we're just going to look at verses 14 and 15. These are very familiar, but I think we need to be reminded of them again. So Joshua 24, verse 14 and 15.

This is Joshua speaking to the people. This is his farewell speech. And he says this, Joshua clearly commands Israel, to fear the Lord and to worship Him.

That's what he means by serve Him with all faithfulness. The word serve is referring to worship. And that's why Joshua opposes the worshiping of the idols and worshiping of the gods beyond the river or the gods of the Amorites with worshiping God.

You are going to either worship God or you are going to worship idols. And so he says, worship the Lord. And he says, it's not just supposed to be done personally.

[9:27] As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. It's both personal and belongs to your family. So the worship of God, it's not only supposed to take place privately in your own heart, but you are to include it in your family's life.

And lest anyone thinks that Joshua is talking about sort of this nominal, general, you know, we're Christians, we go to church, that kind of thing.

We have this vague, religious attachment to God. I would suggest, look at the text again. Does that really jive with what Joshua says?

Is Joshua really talking about just sort of a nominal, loose attachment to God? Or is he actually talking about real, live, worship, acts of worship, where you read, you pray, you sacrifice, things like that?

Well, I don't think that nominal idea jives at all with what Joshua is saying. He says, more or less, choose who you're going to serve. If you're going to serve the gods of the Amorites and the gods of Egypt, then serve them.

[10:36] But don't add on top of them a vanilla layer, a thin coat of God on top, of Yahweh on top. There's nothing nominal or general about this.

He's talking about what actually takes place in your families. And he says, worship the Lord. And brothers and sisters, that's what I want to say to you.

If Israel had the obligation to worship God because he had saved them out of Egypt, then how much more does your family, you as a husband and a wife, and you as a husband and wife with children, have an obligation to worship the Lord because he has sent his son not to save you out of Egypt and that sort of slavery, but to save you out of sin and death and hell.

If they were obligated, and they only had five books of the Bible, how much more are you obligated now that you have the complete revelation?

God has been far more gracious to you than he was ever to an Israelite. And if they were obligated, what about you? So I think Joshua clearly commands family worship.

[11:56] Well, what else does the Bible say about family worship? Well, in Ephesians and in Deuteronomy, God commands parents and specifically fathers to take responsibility in this area.

Paul says, fathers, do not exasperate your children. Instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. So fathers, that's us. That's me. That's me as a dad.

That's me as a husband. That's you as a dad. That's you as a husband. It's our job to train and instruct our children. Now, is he talking about sort of just on the fly kind of thing where you're just going about and you're on the, you know, it's just sort of an informal thing without any sort of set times of instruction?

I think sometimes that's what we say that we do. That we say, you know, well, we're going to instruct our children sort of informally and I think that has a part.

But children have a set time where they learn how to read and they learn how to write and they learn how to do math and science. They go to school and they have set times to do those things.

[13:06] Why shouldn't they have set times to learn the Bible and learn how to pray to learn what it means to be an image bearer of God from their God-given teachers?

And that's you. Well, there's set times to train and practice playing a sport to play soccer, we'll say. You have times where you go and you practice and you learn what it means to play. Well, what about this great business of life that all of us are a part of? Shouldn't we as parents have set times where we specifically instruct our children on what it means to live under God's law and under His rule and with the gospel?

Should we, should God get pushed back? Should God get pushed out of the way? Should God be pushed on the back burner while all these other things take His place?

I think as Christians that cannot be, it just cannot be that those things have a more important place, a more formal place in our children's lives than learning how to pray and learning to sing and learning to live with God.

[14:27] God gives it to parents to teach their children. He doesn't give it to Sunday school teachers. He doesn't even give it to pastors, although those both have a part.

He, the first line of instruction is in the parents. Deuteronomy 6, Moses says, these commandments that I give you today are to be upon 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. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.

Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates. Do you get the picture of what Moses is describing? Our job as parents is to fill up our children with the word of God.

To fill their lives to full with the word of God. It should be everywhere in their lives. The first place they should find it is impressed upon their parents' heart.

[15:28] And then they should find it in their parents' mouths. These are the words that the parents speak to them. And they should run into the word of God at home and on the road and in bed and at the breakfast table.

The word of God should be always in their lives. And it's supposed to be on their hands and on their heads and it should be on their doors and on their gates. Their house is marked.

I don't know if that's literal or symbolic. But it should be filling their lives. So parents, fill them up.

Fill them up with the word of God. Make them memorize scripture. Make them hear it. And part of that filling has to be regular set times where you read and you pray and you sing.

But someone might say, well, isn't this in Deuteronomy 6, I haven't had you turn there, but you know it well, in Deuteronomy 6, isn't he talking about sort of, you know, on the go, on the fly, while you're driving, while you're walking down the road, while you're sitting around the table?

[16:35] And my answer to you is yes. Yes, it is. It's very, he's talking about informal times. I totally agree with you. But I personally guarantee you that if formal times of instruction, formal times of filling your children with the word of God, if those are not taking place, then informal times are not taking place.

spontaneous. Spontaneity doesn't flow out of a vacuum. Spontaneity flows out of discipline. And so what I'm saying is, spontaneous talking about God, that doesn't flow out of not ever formally talking about God.

That flows out of a foundation of every day we have this time where we talk about God. So talking and praying with your teenagers, if you want that to happen in your life, it's not going to happen on a spontaneous basis.

It will only happen on a spontaneous basis if there's this formal foundation. It flows out of a disciplined, regular time of family worship. So think about it this way.

Who can spontaneously sit down to the piano and play? Play something very beautiful? Well, the person who never practices?

[17:52] Or the person who has practiced so much that now they have become a master of the piano, they practice all the time and so now it's second nature. It's that second person, isn't it?

It's the disciplined one who can sit down and play the piano. And so disciplined family worship leads to the spontaneous talking about God that Moses refers to.

The only time that you're going to talk about God in your car and while you're driving and while you're walking and while you're sitting at your table is if you've already talked about God during the day. if that is already a part, a regular part of your life.

There's just no other way around it. Well, that's sort of the biblical basis of family worship.

Ephesians 6, 4, Deuteronomy 6, Joshua 24 clearly teach us that we should, as Christian husbands and wives, have family worship.

Now, why? Why should we do it? This is our second point. Why should you have family worship? Well, we could say that God commands it. We've already talked about that. That's a good reason because God commands it and if we want to build our life on the foundation of Jesus Christ, we're going to do what He says.

[19:07] So, we do it because He commands it. But what else could we say? Well, here's some other reasons. It brings integrity to your family life. It brings integrity to your family life.

And what I mean is it unifies your family around God. So, in the same way that the Lord's Day, it organizes your week. It determines what you're going to do throughout the rest of the week because we know on the Lord's Day, we're going to set it aside for God.

So, my work needs to be done. It organizes, it unifies our life between rest and worship and work. And in the same way, family worship unifies, it organizes your entire family life, your entire family culture.

So, what is your family going to be like? Is your family going to be a place where God is served? Where God is the main thing?

Where the family is about worshipping God? Or is it going to be like the rest of the world? The rest of the world is filled up with TV.

[20:19] The rest of the world is filled up with sports. The rest of the world is filled up with activities. And maybe at best, there's a Sunday church outing that's pasted on top of that week.

And that kind of life has no unity. And it has no integrity. And I'll tell you what, your children see it. They see right through it.

You know, they'll buy it. They'll buy it when they're younger. When they believe whatever you say. But, they won't buy it anymore when you get older.

They'll see right through it. You don't mean what you say. You don't mean what you pray. God isn't that important. If He was, He would be the unifying theme of our family.

But He's not. And so, your Sunday morning church outing is nothing more than a whitewash on a pile of bones. It's a thin layer of cleanliness on a pile of filth of dead men's bones.

[21:28] But when every day is marked with worship, when every day mom and dad and the children of all ages are reading and praying singing, that brings unity and integrity to your family.

And your children see that that's what you're all about. That's what this family is all about. They might not like it. They might chafe under your persistent insistence that they be there, but they are not going to be able to condemn you for hypocrisy.

And hypocrisy kills more boys and girls who grow up in the church than any other sin. Because they are going to see what you really are about. They're going to really read the truth into your life and read what you think is right.

So when you say or when what you say doesn't match what you do, then they are going to believe what you do. Do you understand that, parents? When your life, your family doesn't match with the Bible, it doesn't match with the gospel, then they are not going to believe what I preach.

They're not going to believe what your Sunday school teachers tell them. They're not going to believe what you say. They're going to believe what you do. They're going to believe your life.

[22:51] And they're going to do what you taught them to do. And so regular persistent family worship integrates your life and it makes the gospel credible.

It makes you credible. Well, why else should you do family worship? Because your children need it. Your children need it. They need it to be saved.

And I'm not saying that God's beholden or God's I'm not saying that. I'm not saying that without it your children have no hope. Obviously, that's not what I mean.

But I'm saying that God is a God of means. And one of the most powerful means that he has of saving little boys and little girls and teenage boys and teenage girls is when family worship and a family life matches what the preachers are preaching on Sunday.

When there's truth in both places. And when children have the gospel from infancy, they're able to be made wise unto salvation. And that was true of Timothy, wasn't it?

[23:55] Paul said, from infancy you have known the holy scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Dads, moms, the word of God in little Timothy's ears made him wise unto salvation.

And so are your children wise? Are you making every effort to make them wise unto salvation? So dads and moms, read the word to them.

Pray for them. Instruct them. Don't let them die in ignorance. Don't let them die with their heads full of geometry and science and history.

But blind to sin and blind to their sin and blind to heaven and to hell and to Jesus Christ. Make them wise unto salvation.

Read to them. Let them hear you pray. Let them hear you pray for them. Don't pray just about them when they're away from you, but pray for them right when they're present with you.

[25:05] Charles Spurgeon said that the prayers of his mother had a powerful effect on him. He records one of his mother's prayers and it went like this. Lord, you know if these prayers are not answered in Charles' conversion, these very prayers will bear witness against him in the judgment day.

Spurgeon wrote that the thought that my mother's prayers would serve as a witness against me in the day of judgment sent terror into my heart.

prayer. So moms, let your children hear you pray for them. If you love their souls at all, pray for them. If you love their souls at all, pray for them so they can hear you.

Pray and read for their salvation sake. that's a couple of reasons. I could give more. But if God's glory, obeying God, your own integrity, and your children's welfare is not enough, then what will be? What will be? Now very briefly, how do you do it? There's no point in getting all fired up, like we're going to do this, and you don't know how to do it, and you stumble out the gate.

[26:23] Thankfully, it's not hard. It's not hard. If you think it's hard, then let me just say very carefully that you're wrong.

You're wrong. It's not hard. There's hard things about it, but the actual practice itself is not hard.

We're not, you know, doing rocket science. We're not smashing atoms. You're sitting, and you're reading, and you're praying with your children.

And with your spouse. And so, how do you do it? How do you do it? Well, first, if you haven't begun, if you haven't begun, if you've never done it, then you are going to have to begin with the hardest thing of all.

And that's to humble yourself, to repent. Humble yourself before God. And then, and seek His mercy. And then humble yourself before your wife and your children.

children. And be honest with them and say, you know, I haven't done what I was supposed to do. I've let things, I've let us get into a habit where we don't have family time.

[27:27] And you might not like it, but we're going to start. And I might not be any good at it, but that can't, that's not going to stop me. We're going to do this. And so, I've sinned.

Will you please forgive me? Will you please pray for me? And that's step one. If you haven't begun, that's step one. That is the hardest thing of all. And then you're going to have to find a time that will work for you.

And it will work for everyone. Or at least most people, most of the time. It might be early in the morning. It might be late at night.

I don't know. Every family is different. But you need to find the time. time. And you might say, but Jason, this is exactly where the problem is. There isn't enough time.

There isn't a time that will work for everyone. My answer is, it's a matter of priorities. It is a matter of priorities. We always find time for the things that are most important to us.

[28:30] And so, what are you, who are you going to worship? Who are you going to worship? Are you going to worship the gods of the Amorites? That's the gods of the land that we live in.

And what are the gods of the land that we live in? Well, we worship comfort, and we worship ease, and we worship money, and we worship entertainment, we worship sports. Worship ourselves, primarily.

So, are you going to worship the gods of the land, or are you going to worship the Lord? And so, if your family is too busy, let me seriously ask you, do you have a TV?

Do you have a Facebook account? Do your children play in more than one sport? And I'm going to be honest, family worship is more important than all those things.

It's more important than those things. God will be your judge, but I wouldn't want to be in your shoes when you explain to him why you weren't able to have family time because of those things.

[29:39] When you were too busy for the wrong reasons. Family worship begins with repentance. It always begins with repentance. And so, that might mean taking an axe to your life, and cutting it, cutting parts off, and to make room for it.

But you have to find the time. You have to find the time. Well, then, as to family worship itself, there's nothing tricky about it. Make it right.

Make it relevant. Make it relaxed. Make it right. What you say, somehow, should be connected to this book and should come out of this book.

However you choose to do that, it should come from this book. Make it relevant. Talk about what's important to your family.

Show them how this book, what it's saying, applies to what's going on in your family right now. And then, make it relaxed. I've heard of some families turning family worship into basically a liturgy into a church service where they have sayings and recitations.

[30:48] I think, to be honest, that's nuts. Make it relaxed. It should be pleasant for your children. Make this to be an encouraging time for them. And if you do, your children will thank you.

If you do, your wife will thank you. They'll be a lot better off. Make it relaxed. Other than that, keep it brief. 15 minutes tops if you have younger children. 20 minutes tops if you have older children.

Keep it brief. Get everyone involved. It shouldn't be daddy preacher and children and mommy audience. It's not a one-way thing during family worship.

Ask them questions. Use a catechism. Catechize them. Ask them lots of questions. One of the best things that we did and do, and you can do if you have young children, is act it out.

Act it out. We've acted out David and Goliath. We've acted out Saul chasing David into the caves.

We've acted out Jesus healing blind people. And dads, this is a great thing because you always get to be the bad guy.

[31:52] And so there you are. I'm always the bad guy. Act it out. Get everyone involved. Sing together. Even if you're not any good, sing together.

After you're done singing, laugh at yourself and do it because God is good. Your Father in heaven is good. And you should show your children that by singing joyfully to him.

Well, if you're worried about how it will go over. Well, let me, before I go into that, one other thing. If your children are too young or if you don't have children and you're just married or you're planning to get married, plan on doing this right away.

You don't need children to have a family. That's one point. The second thing is, from infancy, you can know the scripture. So, from the very first day, make this a habit because it's a lot easier to make it a habit when they're young instead of waiting until they're older and then you have to do the

whole repentance thing, which is a lot harder.

And I'm being very serious. It is much better if you have a one-year-old and you keep it to five minutes and then you, guess what, you have a two-year-old and you make it ten minutes and it grows with them.

[33:10] Make it a habit right from the very beginning. If you're worried about how it will go over and if you're worried about how your family will take this and how your children will take it, there might be some real genuine concerns.

And I'm not belittling them when I say don't worry. God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. Everything that you need for this is in Jesus' hand.

He died to purchase it for you. And all you need to do is ask him and he will give. And then throw all your anxieties on him because he cares for you.

If you're anxious about this and anxious how your teenagers are going to take it, Jesus knows how to carry anxieties and he knows how to give grace to the weak.

He says, my grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in weakness. And so if you're worried, if you're anxious, take all your weakness, take all your sin, take all your anxiety, and take it to Jesus and let's obey him.

[34:24] Let's be the moms and dads that Jesus calls us to be. Well, as we finish, let's go back to D.A. Carson. And this is how he ended his sermon and I'm going to end it this way too.

The worst kind of home to be brought up in is the one with many pretensions and low performance.

The best kind of home to be brought up in is the one with few pretensions and high performance.

So moms and dads, actions always speak louder than words. So an aspiration, a desire to do something isn't actually doing it.

The best kind of home to be brought up in is where there's few aspirations, where there's humble hopes, and then there's a lot of performance to back it up.

A lot more action. Well, as we close, we're going to stand and sing, Oh Give Us Homes from the Overhead. And this song is a prayer and so we'll just make it our closing prayer and after we've sung, we'll be dismissed.

[35:32] So let's stand and sing. Thank you.