

Family Worship

What makes the home of a Christian different from the home of an unbeliever? A clear difference will show itself on Sunday – the Christian family or individual will attend church and seek to set aside the Lord's day for spiritual rather than earthly activities. Proper observance of the Lord's day is crucial for our homes. Without it, our homes will be swept away in a flood of worldliness.

Aside from the observance of the Lord's day, what makes your home, your life as a believing family, different from the homes and lives of your unbelieving neighbours? Many of us are surrounded by homes that are more or less orderly. Fathers go to work and come home to do various jobs about the house. Children go to school. Mothers work, perhaps in the home, or perhaps in a job outside the home. From the outside, this may appear quite similar to your own home.

What makes our homes different?

What makes the Christian's home radically different is, first and foremost, the Word of God. The Word of God must be the foundation of the home. The Word of God must determine the relationships in the home. It controls the entire life of the home. Daily instruction is given from Scripture in a Christian home.

Second, in this home, prayer to God is continually raised both individually and communally.

Third, God is praised by the people in a Christian home.

Such a home is distinctly Christian. The family gathers together daily to read the Bible, to pray, and to praise God. This home honours God and His Word. This activity of gathering about God's Word daily has a profound effect on each member of the family, not only inside the home, but also in the school, on the job, and at play.

The Christian home (of either a family or an individual) must have regular devotions, or as it is often designated, family worship. If the family that calls itself Christian, followers of Christ, does not gather around His Word daily, there is little that distinguishes it from the unbelieving neighbours. In such a home, something is terribly wrong.

The Bible stresses the fathers' responsibility to teach their children about God and to praise Him (as in Deuteronomy 4 and 6; Ephesians 6; Proverbs; and many others). Consider Psalm 78:4, where believers promise, "*We shall not keep them hidden from their children. We shall tell the next generation about the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, His power and the wonderful things that He has done.*" Not only will they teach the children the truth about God, but they will do so in such a way that they together praise Him. The psalmist shows that this activity is not optional - God commands it. For "*He has established a Testimony in Jacob and has appointed a Teaching in Israel, which He has commanded our fathers to make known to their children*" (verse 5), and He shows the seriousness of teaching this: "*that the next generation may know them, the children who are yet to be born, that they may grow up and tell their children, that they may place their confidence in God and not forget what God has done but keep His Commandments*" (verses 6-7).

Sadly, in our modern society, regular family worship is pushed aside for various reasons. Irregular workhours for dad or mum, extra-curricular activities after school, and various regular activities such as sport, are just a few activities that can do damage to our worship. This is not to say that any of these activities are wrong. It is important to have a job and an education and to keep fit and so on. And of course, we all miss a few Sundays of worship due to sickness, holidays, and other events, even having to work on a Sunday morning, but this isn't the problem. The problem is that often because of these activities, all worship – either in the family home or of a Sunday morning - is pushed aside and forgotten about. There is no attempt made to find time for God. But there are solutions.

If the evenings are busy, gather together for family devotions early in the morning. Some people even have late night devotions - this only works if you have no younger children. If you work on a Sunday and can't make services, worship services are readily available online, and if you desire the Sacrament, call your pastor! A solution must be found, for the neglect of worship is not an option. To simply forgo any attempt for worship can lead to spiritual apathy as the Word of God takes second place to everything else.

In our busy lives, we must take the time for family worship through the week, but also to come to the Lord's house on a Sunday morning. Again, there are roadblocks. Sadly, most shopping centres are open on Sunday mornings, and far too many sports are played on a Sunday morning. Often these things take away from our time for worship and fellowship with fellow believers. We must ask ourselves, "what comes first: God's serving of us, or our own enjoyment?"

We must hold fast the Word of God and the place that it must have in our homes and our lives. It is even more important to do so as the days grow increasingly evil. When Paul described to Timothy the terrible wickedness that would fill the earth in the last days, he admonished Timothy, "*Nevertheless, as for you, continue in the things that you have learned and about which you have become convinced! For you know from whom you have learned them, and that 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). The evils that Paul described are being fulfilled in our day. Let us be sure, then, that our children from their earliest days know the Holy Scriptures. Among other things, let godly parents engage their punctual attendance on family worship both in the home, and at church.