

## Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God

by Voddie Baucham Jr, Grace Family Baptist Church

Why is it that Christian families think nothing of a lifestyle that demands hours per week traipsing across town, blood, sweat, and tears from our children, and thousands of dollars each year from our bank accounts, but the idea of a twenty-minute daily commitment to family worship immediately strikes them as too much to ask? I fear that we have lost our way. Christianity has become so marginal in our culture that even those who claim allegiance to Christ have very little to show for it in terms of time and commitment.

I must admit that arriving at a consistent commitment to daily family worship was not easy for our family. We, like every other family, have so many things to do that the time often gets away from us. However, once we decided that our time in the Word was more important and would have a more lasting impact than anything else we could possibly do, we decided to make our family devotions the immovable object in our family life. If school or meals or free time or anything else has to move, it can. However, when we rise (or at least right after breakfast) and before we lie down in the evening, we will spend time together around the Word of God.

This is not to say that family worship twice a day is a definitive mandate. It is not. Some families may worship together three times a day, others three times a month. However, the crucial issue is that we make time to gather

together before the throne of God. The benefits are myriad.

“Nothing will spur a father toward godly, spiritual discipline in his own walk with Christ more than leading his family in worship. In order to teach his wife and children, he will have to

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study the Scriptures on his own. A godly woman will be encouraged and inspired as she sees her husband take responsibility and lead in family worship. This practice sets a tone of harmony and love in the household and is a source of strength when they go through affliction together. As they pray for each other their mutual love is strengthened.”<sup>1</sup>

It all comes down to a simple question: Why are we here? Does our family exist to prepare children for the Major Leagues? If so, then baseball will be the center of our family’s universe, and everything will bow to the whims and wishes of the baseball god. Does our family exist to produce socialites? If so, then our family must revolve around the social calendars of our overloaded teenagers and their hectic schedules. However, if our family exists to glorify and honor God and to lay a biblical foundation in the lives of our children, then we must not allow anything to interfere with our commitment to family worship, prayer, and Bible study.

To quote Pink once more: “An old writer well said, ‘A family without prayer is like a house without a roof, open and exposed to all the storms of Heaven.’ All our domestic comforts and temporal mercies issue from the lovingkindness of the Lord, and the best we can do in return is to gratefully acknowledge, together, His goodness to us as a family. Excuses against the discharge of this sacred

duty are idle and worthless. Of what avail will it be when we render an account to God for the stewardship of our families to say that we had not time available, working hard from morn till eve? The more pressing be our temporal duties, the greater our need of seeking spiritual succor. Nor may any Christian plead that he is not qualified for such a work: gifts and talents are developed by use and not by neglect.”<sup>2</sup>

I must admit that these words cut me to the quick. Too many times I have allowed the cares of this world to crowd out the things of God in my family. Too many times I have allowed the business of the family schedule to dictate the amount of time we would devote to God. All I can do is fall on the mercy of God and be grateful for another day to seek His face.

I know these words sound foreign to most of us. At least they would have to me a few years ago. I was a seminary graduate, an ordained minister, on staff at a local church, preaching to thousands of people across the country, and I did not understand this principle! My family and I ran ourselves ragged trying to

**Voddie Baucham** serves as pastor of preaching at Grace Family Baptist Church in Spring, TX, where he resides with his wife and six children.

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do all of the things that modern families think they must do in order to have healthy, happy, well-balanced (read: spoiled) children. We had more soccer practices, piano practices, play dates, church activities, birthday parties, cook-outs, and meetings than you could shake a stick at. We were fortunate to have family devotions once a month, let alone once a day.

The sad thing about our condition is that we were still among the top-tier Christian parents. At least we were homeschooling our children and had Bible in their curriculum. At least we were in church regularly. At least our daughter wasn't dressing like a streetwalker, and our son wasn't a thug or a partying drunkard. But the bottom line was that we were not building a lasting foundation in our children's lives. We weren't teaching them to live Christianity—we were just teaching them to play at it. We were teaching them that church was a good excursion, but nothing more. We were showing them that Jesus owned our Sundays and our Wednesdays, but not our home. It wasn't until we began to have regular family worship that things began to change.

I cannot tell you exactly when we began to worship on a daily basis, but I can tell you that it changed us forever. I distinctly remember watching my son run around gathering up Bibles one day as he anxiously anticipated our family worship, and I said to myself, *How could we have missed this?* Now we feel like something is missing (and it is) when we don't gather together to worship the Lord.

### Where Do We Begin? (Seven Steps)

#### Family Worship Must Be Born of Conviction

You must be convinced that this is something you need, and you must be convicted that this is something required of you as a parent who is responsible for bringing your children up in "the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). If you are not convicted of this truth, you will not follow through. If you read the words of this chapter and dismiss them as overzealous or fanatical, you will not implement family worship. However, if the things you have read to this point ring true to you and line up with what you read in the Scriptures, then you are well on your way.

We tried to establish family devotions in the past, but it never lasted long. We would gather together for singing, prayer, Bible reading, etc., but it was never consistent. We would do fine for a few days and then miss a day, then another, and another. Eventually we would be right back where we started. It was not until we began to read about the importance of family worship and hang around families who were committed to regular devotions that we finally turned the corner.

#### Family Worship Begins with the Head of the Household

Mom, if your husband hasn't read this book, do not—I repeat, do not—hit him over the head with it. The last thing you want to do is rush in and demand that he start leading the family in worship on a daily basis. First of all, that would clearly violate the principles in 1 Peter 3:1–2:

*In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may*

*be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.*

If you want God's blessing, you must do things God's way. Moreover, forcing your husband to take the lead would contradict the first principle (it must be born of conviction, not coercion or guilt). Try to get your husband to read this chapter, and allow the Lord to use it in his life as you prayerfully and respectfully wait on the Lord. However, if you are a single mom, then you are the head of the household, so go for it!

This is not to say that Mom should never lead family worship. On the contrary, there are times when she must. In fact, during my eight to ten days a month when I'm traveling, my wife leads family worship. However, as the head of the household, family worship will usually rise and fall with me. And if I am committed to family worship, my wife and children will likely follow suit.

#### Family Worship Must Be Scheduled

If we do not plan family worship, we will skip it. In our home, family worship happens right after breakfast and right before bed each day. That way if we have to start the day earlier or later, family worship doesn't get scrapped because of time. This will also turn family worship into a habit. Of course, that doesn't mean you want it to be a rote exercise, but you do want it to be a regular practice.

This is especially important when you begin to implement family worship. It has been said that it takes thirty days to form a habit. Try getting on a rigid schedule for the next thirty days

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in order to form a habit of family worship. It is very important that you get started and see it through. Scheduling your time will go a long way toward establishing a pattern.

### Family Worship Must Be Simple

Family worship does not have to be a big production. You do not have to produce PowerPoint slides or an order of service. All you need is a commitment to gather together and the Word of God. In the mornings we sing a few songs around the piano, and then we read through a devotional book (usually a catechism). In the evenings we read through the Bible. We simply start where we left off and read on a pace that will get us through the Bible in a year. Keep it simple. Don Whitney notes that “there are three elements to family worship: read the Bible, pray, and sing.”<sup>3</sup>

One of the benefits of keeping things simple is that it doesn’t take much to add a little zing from time to time to keep things interesting. Every once in a while I will add a new element in order to spice things up. And sometimes I will remove an element in order to simplify things even further. Don’t outthink yourself on this.

### Family Worship Must Be Natural

Family worship is not the time for you to do your best George Beverly Shea or Darlene Zschech impression. Just be you. Remember, God sent your children home with you, so He must want you to be the one to lead them. If God wanted George Beverly Shea to lead your children

in family worship, they would have been born into the Shea family instead of yours. Choose songs that you and your family love to sing. Study materials that fit your situation in life.

This is also important because children can detect a lack of authenticity. They know when we’re faking it. They live with us all day every day; so when we do something that is out of character, it sticks out like a sore thumb. Moreover, if we are not careful we will teach our children not to be themselves before God. Just be natural.

### Family Worship Must Be Mandatory

No rogue members of the family get to skip out on family worship. If that sullen teenager thinks this is something that doesn’t register on his cool meter, just inform him that it doesn’t have to. I do recognize that this will be difficult for some families at first, but I assure you it will be to your benefit and to the benefit of your children if you make this mandatory for everyone in the house. If your teenager does not want to participate, then you have rebellion on your hands, and that must be handled separately, but family worship is not an option.

I do not mean to make light of this situation. I know that teenagers can be difficult. Nor am I suggesting that all you have to do is make a rule and the child’s rebellion will melt away. You know better than that. The fact is that rebellion must be handled biblically and emphatically. My

point here is that the rebellion is a separate issue. Take, for example, a child with a bad attitude about algebra. We wouldn’t think for a moment that the answer was to simply avoid algebra. We would continue to teach the child algebra while we worked on the rebellion. The same must be true of family worship. Family worship is no less important than algebra; in fact it’s more important. Make it mandatory, and stand your ground.

### Family Worship Must Be Participatory

Make sure family worship is not a performance by one gifted member of the family that is merely observed by everyone else. Invite your children to join in singing, choosing songs, reading Scripture, discussing issues, and praying. You will be amazed at how willing your children are to participate in family worship and at how much (and how fast) they will grow in the process. Participatory family worship can even touch the heart of that resistant teen. Get them all involved and engaged in the process.

### NOTES

1. David Wegener, “The Father’s Role in Family Worship,” *Journal of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Vol. 3, Issue 4, 1998.
2. A.W. Pink, “Family Workshop,” available from [www.apuritansmind.com/thechristianfamily/PinkAWFamilyWorship.htm](http://www.apuritansmind.com/thechristianfamily/PinkAWFamilyWorship.htm)
3. Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship: In the Bible, in History, and in Your Home* (Shepherdsville: KY Center for Biblical Spirituality, 2006), 37.

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