



## Covenantal Training in the Home

When was the last time you had a "good" family devotion time? Do you know even what it means to have a family devotion (perhaps you have never experienced one or never made time for one)? Does your family truly pray together for each other's daily needs or only a perfunctory prayer at meal times and/or when you put the children to bed at night? Is the idea of a family altar or family worship time a "foreign concept" to you? Yet, are you surprised to see so many of our covenantal children abandoning the church at their first opportunity after high school?



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If parents do not demonstrate their love of Christ and the means of grace He has given to us to instruct our children; do not be surprised to see your adult children opting out of church for other more "relevant" activities on Sundays. This lifestyle of prayer and worship must begin in our homes. If our families display a binding covenant relationship with each other, His elect children will have a new reality in their young lives.

The last "REACHING" article dealt with the whole concept of Covenantal Education. We showed that our God is a God of relationships. He has established an eternal Covenant of Grace with His chosen people. A "biblical covenant" is a permanent agreement with particular conditions. In this wonderful Covenant of Grace, He has put the covenant curse upon His Son, fulfilling the obligation for us who are covenant breakers so that "we can be His people and He can be our God." (Jeremiah 31-32). In order for our children to understand this wonderful relationship that God has established and maintains, they must be shown by biblical precept, personal examples and deeds.

In order for us to pass our heritage to our covenantal children, training in the home is essential. Many people take the attitude that the church will take care of all "religious training", but the Bible demands that the parents and specifically the father, have a major role in raising children in the nurture and admonition (instruction) of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 78, Proverbs 1-4). The devil would like nothing better than for each family to turn over to the "professionals" the job of instructing our covenant children. Our children will soon come to understand that covenantal training is a "secondary, take-it or leave-it option." Christianity becomes a "Sunday-thing" and irrelevancy is around the corner.

Here is a basic outline for a daily family altar/devotion time. My family follows a similar format. In the past we have added and subtracted to it as my schedule allows - remember the length is not as important as doing it:

**Opening** - Prayer for God's Blessing

**Hymn** - Use the same popular hymn every day for a month. This will insure every family knows the best ones. Do a little background search on why the hymn was written to give it new life. There is a good list of the best hymns (along with other tremendous Family Altar suggestions) found in Pastor Terry Johnson's book "THE FAMILY WORSHIP BOOK" (call 912-236-346 for a copy).

**Scripture Reading** - We read the Proverb of the day (there are 31 of them) plus 1-5 Psalms. Notice that Psalms can be read in five groups of 30 Psalms, so the fifth day you would read Psalm 5, 35, 65, 95, and 125. Let each member of your family read. If you are going through the Bible in one year you can read different sections of the Bible each day. There are many guides to help you. After you have read sections, talk about themes that you see or can relate to. This means that fathers must read the section first so that he is ready to lead a discussion. A "study Bible" is a great source of help for this, we use the "Geneva Study Bible" edited by R.C. Sproul.

**Prayer** - Have each family member share what their specific needs are for that day, then have a time of conversational prayer, closed by the father. Keep a journal of your prayers to see how God has answered them! Remember to use the acrostic A.C.T.S. (**A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving and then **S**upplication-asking for things we need) to ensure that your prayers are not laundry lists of requests.

As I have had more morning time with my family in recent years, here are some other things our family does together at devotion times:

1. We use "PROJECT WORLD" to pray for a different country each day, we discuss the country and the spiritual needs of that country. If we know of any missionaries in the country we will specifically pray for them.
2. Our church has a prayer calendar which gives us other subjects and different members to pray for each day during the month.
3. We sometimes use Christmas cards (a different one each day) to remind us to pray for family and friends.
4. Take a character quality for a week at a time (humility, patience, attentiveness, generosity, discernment, etc.) and as you read through the Bible discuss how the quality appears in people's lives. (Christian Character Curriculum may be ordered from CMI.)
5. Use the Family Devotion Time as an opportunity to review the Children's Catechism Questions and Scripture proofs that your children are learning in Sunday School, using our "Bible Building Blocks of the Faith Curriculum".
6. We have learned that any format can become anemic and boring. It's always a challenge to put life into it! You can easily add and subtract things as necessary.

As a further help to churches who see a need to assist families; we will gladly alter CMI seminars to guide you through home family altar times. The Children's Catechism is an excellent source of family devotion worship. Many families are using the "Bible Building Blocks of the Faith" as the core material for family worship. Why? Because CMI takes each catechism question and adds a Bible memory verse and Bible lesson to make the concept truly relevant in the child's life.

Don't miss out on starting the day (or ending it) praising God and deepening our Covenantal roots.

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