



What Works For Us (and Might Work For You) in Family Worship¹

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lead pastor, and business owner Brian spent two years serving on the board of the Acts 29 Network, where he directed church planter training, coaching, and networking for three west coast states. Brian also co-founded and led the Sojourn Network, a national church planting network. He currently leads Church Multiplication for Pacific Church Network. Brian has coached several hundred leaders around the world and is the Executive Director of Context Coaching Inc., a firm that specializes in coaching leaders. Brian holds a Master's degree from Talbot School of Theology, has been married for twenty years to the love of his life, and has four children.

Are you a parent?

Then you need to know that your kids are going to learn primarily what you teach them.

You might sometimes wish that you could delegate the spiritual training of your kids, but you are the one who is responsible to teach, train, and disciple your kids. This is not something to be outsourced to Sunday School teachers or youth pastors as past generations have sometimes done.

Over my fifteen years of parenting, my wife and I have continuously attempted to teach our kids what is true and call them to live in light of the truth of who God is and what he has done. We have read the Psalms and Proverbs as a family several times. When we do this, we have each of our kids (who is old enough to read) read a verse until we are finished with a chapter. After reading a chapter we have a discussion about what we learn in the chapter about who God is, what He is done, and how He relates to us. Then we

finish by praying together.

We have read through The Jesus Storybook Bible several times. We have also had seasons where we felt like complete failures at family worship. But we have never given up. In light of what we have learned over the years, here are four words of advice to help you press forward in family worship:

1. YOU ARE BY FAR THE PRIMARY SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE IN THE LIFE OF YOUR KIDS.

Consider how Moses instructs the Israelites in the book of Deuteronomy concerning God's ways:

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7, ESV)

The Scriptures make it clear that parents are to teach their kids God's truths. But what about teenagers?

Recently I read a summary of the writing of researcher, Christian Smith, who asserts that our assumptions about American teenagers are often incorrect. He says:

In U.S. culture, the very ideas of "teenager" and "rebellion" are virtually synonymous...But that impression is fundamentally wrong. What we learned from interviewing hun-

dreds of different kinds of teenagers all around the country is that the vast majority of American teenagers are exceedingly conventional in their religious identity and practices. Very few are restless, alienated, or rebellious; rather the majority of U.S. teenagers seem basically content to follow the faith of their families with little questioning.

Contrary to what many people think, you are the primary spiritual influence in the life of your kids. Wayne Rice, one of the pioneers of American youth ministry, argues this compellingly in his book, *Reinventing Youth Ministry (Again)*. Knowing that we have a large influence on our children's lives is both comforting and scary.

2. DOING SOMETHING FOR FAMILY WORSHIP IS FAR BETTER THAN DOING NOTHING.

My friend Josh McPherson, pastor of Grace City Church in Wenatchee, Washington recently told me, "A good plan today is far better than a perfect plan next week." Perfection can be the enemy of progress. Read a verse and talk about it. Pray together. Get a book and go through it. But do something. Perfection has never worked for us. We have never, not even a single time, done family worship 7 nights in a row. Our goal is to pull it off somewhere around 4 nights a week. We have to

work around high school basketball games, gymnastics, music lessons, dinner with neighbors, and the like. But we keep at it knowing that something is far better than nothing.

3. DON'T QUIT WHEN YOU GET DISCOURAGED.

The best way to save money, unless you are super rich, is not normally to make a one time deposit. The best way to save money is to put some away every month. Eventually, in most cases, your consistent savings will amount to a large savings account. This same principle of consistency is true with family worship. There will be times when a fight breaks out during family worship or when you feel like yelling at everyone. Come back to it tomorrow night. Don't get discouraged and quit when your kids don't vow to spend their lives on the mission field in Africa. Stay with it for years. Don't quit.

4. WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW FOR FAMILY WORSHIP.

A few weeks ago I called my friend, Chad Vegas, who pastors Sovereign Grace Church in Bakersfield, CA. I asked him for some insight into what might be effective for us to do in family worship now that we have two teenagers. Chad recommended that we take our family through the New City Catechism (www.newcitycatechism.com). We started this a few weeks ago and love it. Here is

how it works for us:

- We have dinner as a family 4-5 nights per week.
- Before we get up from the dinner table we have a time of family worship.
- We focus on one catechism question per week. (There are 52 total)
- I printed 6 copies of the questions so each person has a copy. We keep them next to the dinner table.
- There is an iPad and iPhone app for the New City Catechism. I have this open when I am leading.
- By the end of the week, our kids have the catechism question and answer memorized.
- There are accompanying Scriptures that go along with the question of the week.
- Chandra (my wife) and I talk through with our kids the implications of the question and the Scripture that we read.
- We pray together.

It's not rocket science.

Here is my final challenge: No matter what, start having family worship this week.

ENDNOTES

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