

Principles and Practice for Family Devotions

Family Devotions is a time, when fathers as the head of the house take the time to teach a simple truth to the children lovingly from young so that the children in the home can have Bible truths taught to them. This is done in obedience to Deuteronomy 6: 7 – 9 “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. / And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. / And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”

The Father is responsible for this important event in the life of the family. It is strongly recommended that this is done daily.

Family devotions need not be long. It depends on the age of the children: 1 year =5 min, 2 years = 10 min, 3 years = 15 min, 4 years = 20 min, 5years= 25min. It should not be too prolonged but it should be long enough for the word to be taught and the children listen to the truths of God.

Preparation

- The father may use daily devotionals or preferably he should be teaching straight from the bible after having studied the word of God himself. For variety, the father can use a missionary story book.
- The father should plan the time for the family to have the devotions and every one should know the time. This time must never be planned when there is a service going on in church and as the head of the house, the priority would be to bring the family to the Lord's house. This is in obedience to Heb 10:25.
- Ensure anything that may interrupt the devotions to be removed or put to a later date. Homework need to finished before or after the devotions, electronic gadgets need to be switched off for the duration of this time

The Devotion Itself

Start

Songs. (He's able, with Christ in the vessel – let the children choose. Make it fun – enjoy the time of singing)

Read the verse in the Bible

Explain /read the explanation (Animate! for children → they need to know that it is fun to learn the word of God).

Derive a simple lesson for the child. Articulate it clearly and plainly to your children.

E.g: when we feel scared, what must we do? Pray to God.

Ending

Ask each one to share any cares or concerns.

Pray together. This prayer time must be led by the father. If the father is not at home, then the mother must lead.

An Example Of Bible Time

1. Father gathers the children and family, wife supports the devotion time, children are attentive to the session
2. Begin with one or two songs
3. Turn to the verse and read
4. Father will comment on the verse and teach one spiritual lesson to the family
5. The family then asks any questions about the verse or about the spiritual life. Little children may make comments or ask questions that

are pertinent: as parents, there is a need to be able to answer these questions as it will build confidence into the children that parents can be approached when they have important spiritual questions to ask and if the questions are too difficult, then the parent will need to find the answer and then explain to the child.

6. Include action after the devotion: “so what is one thing we will do as we learn from God’s word?”
E.g: Children: “be thankful for my food and finish my food without complaining” / “ when others don’t have, we share” / “ set aside 20cents from my allowance to give to God when I go to church”
E.g: Parents to follow through with the children’s answers and encourage and train them to do those things that are needful for them.
7. Have a simple prayer time: one or two of them may pray. If the child volunteers to pray, allow the child to do so.
8. Close the session on a encouraging note
Praying together as a family is a very important practice in a home which wants to honour the Lord Jesus Christ. Developing the prayerfulness habit in the family require us to practice that prayer at home daily.

An Example Of Prayer Time

1. Father takes charge of the prayer time (If Father is not available, then the mother takes charge)
2. Ask if anyone has a prayer need, a request, be open. Encourage the children to talk and share

3. Allocate prayer items to the little ones “Little John, you will pray that mother gets better from her flu”
4. For those who have older children and they are able to pray by themselves, give them the opportunity to pray “whatever God lays on their heart”. This phrase means that whatever they would like to pray specifically to the Lord for.
5. The family then prays, beginning with the one on the right hand side of the parent in charge (even the younger ones who are able to converse fluently)
6. The Father will then close the prayer time. A good way of closing would be ensure that each family member hugs and kisses each other good night before turning in to bed

Behaviour during the Devotions

Parents

Be enthusiastic. Your excitement will influence your children to love these sessions. Be prayerful and be loving.

Children

The children need to learn to stay seated and listen and parents are to encourage them firmly but gently to be seated to listen to the word of God.

Outcome

The goal of family devotions is never to change behaviours overnight but to

- Help the Father fulfill his role as the head of the house
- Help the children to learn spiritual truths daily
- Help the children learn to be still before the Lord

- To strengthen the family spiritually
- To prepare the children to live for Christ
- To prevent children from falling into the sins of this world
- To prevent a destroyed life by instilling God's truth in their hearts

When the altar is practiced at home daily, the child has the privilege of hearing the word of God and learning the truths of the gospel that will cause him to be wise unto salvation 2 Tim 3:16.

May every family learn to lead their family in the ways of God in obedience to Deuteronomy 6:1 – 10.

Remember our Lord's admonition that as we train our children in the Lord, we still need to depend on Christ to transform us for His glory and our children to receive His grace in Salvation.

Evangelist-Pastor Johnny Tan
Ambassador Baptist Church
Mobile 91000305

