

GOD FIRST AT HOME

FAMILY WORSHIP



GOD FIRST
ADVENTIST STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

God First At Home—Family Worship

Copyright ©2019 by Stewardship Ministries Department

Compiled by Marcos F. Bomfim

Edited by Johnetta B. Flomo and Sandra Blackmer

Page Design and Layout, Johnetta B. Flomo

Cover, Synesthezia Emotional Marketing LLC

This material may be translated, printed, or photocopied by any Seventh-day Adventist entity without securing further permission. Republished documents must include the credit line: “Stewardship Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, used by permission.” Selling this work for profit is prohibited.

Stewardship Ministries Department
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA
www.adventiststewardship.com

GOD FIRST AT HOME—FAMILY WORSHIP

(Based on Ellen G. White's book *Child Guidance*, pages 517-526, Chapter 78: "The Power of Prayer.")

Purpose: To develop values and actions related to the Family Worship, based on God's revealed will.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. **Facilitator and secretary:** Each group must choose a leader, who will conduct the discussion, and a secretary, who will report the conclusions.
2. **Read the inspired texts:** Before any other work, each group must read all the assigned texts (one paragraph per participant).
3. The **Group Activity** is provided at the end of the text in the "Growing Together" section.
4. **Answers are based on the texts:** The group must find the answer(s) based primarily on the inspired text provided, and not only from opinions, unless there is an open question, with specific instruction to discuss personal opinions.
5. **Group opinion:** In case of open questions (no right or wrong answers), the group should discuss which opinion(s) would better express the thought of the group (not only that of the leader).
6. **Timeliness:** The group should spend no more than five (5) minutes on each question, and secretaries must take no more than one (1) minute to answer publicly.
7. **Paragraph zero:** Be aware that some pages may begin with paragraph zero (0), which is the continuation of the last paragraph of the previous page.

Page 517

The Need for Family Prayer—Every family should rear its altar of prayer, realizing that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. If any persons in the world need the strength and encouragement that religion gives, it is those who are responsible for the education and training of children. They cannot do their work in a manner acceptable to God while their daily example teaches those who look to them for guidance that they can live without God. If they educate their children to live for this life only, they will make no preparation for eternity. They will die as they have lived, without God, and parents will be called to account for the loss of their souls. Fathers, mothers, you need to seek God morning and evening at the family altar, that you may learn how to teach your children wisely, tenderly, lovingly.—p. 517.1

Family Worship Neglected—If ever there was a time when every house should be a house of prayer, it is now. Infidelity and skepticism prevail. Iniquity abounds. Corruption flows in the vital currents of the soul, and rebellion against God breaks out in the life. Enslaved by sin, the moral powers are under the tyranny of Satan. The soul is made the sport of his temptations; and unless some mighty arm is stretched out to rescue him, man goes where the archrebel leads the way.—p. 517.2

And yet, in this time of fearful peril, some who profess to be Christians have no family worship. They do not honor God in the home; they do not teach their children to love and fear Him. Many have separated themselves so far from Him that they feel under condemnation in approaching Him. They cannot “come boldly unto the throne of grace,” “lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” Hebrews 4:16; 1 Timothy 2:8. They have not a living connection with God. Theirs is a form of godliness without the power.—p. 517.3

Page 518

The idea that prayer is not essential is one of Satan’s most successful devices to ruin souls. Prayer is communion with God, the Fountain of wisdom, the Source of strength, and peace, and happiness. —p. 518.1

Tragedy of a Prayerless Home—I know of nothing that causes me so great sadness as a prayerless home. I do not feel safe in such a house for a single night; and were it not for the hope of helping the parents to realize their necessity and their sad neglect, I would not remain. The children show the result of this neglect, for the fear of God is not before them. —p. 518.2

Formal Prayer Is Not Acceptable—In many cases the morning and evening worship is little

more than a mere form, a dull, monotonous repetition of set phrases in which the spirit of gratitude or the sense of need finds no expression. The Lord accepts not such service. But the petitions of a humble heart and contrite spirit He will not despise. The opening of our hearts to our heavenly Father, the acknowledgment of our entire dependence, the expression of our wants, the homage of grateful love—this is true prayer.—p. 518.3

Let There Be Households of Prayer—Like the patriarchs of old, those who profess to love God should erect an altar to the Lord wherever they pitch their tent.... Fathers and mothers should often lift up their hearts to God in humble supplication for themselves and their children. Let the father, as priest of the household, lay upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice, while the wife and children unite in prayer and praise. In such a household Jesus will love to tarry.—p. 518.4

Page 519

Let the members of every family bear in mind that they are closely allied to heaven. The Lord has a special interest in the families of His children here below. Angels offer the smoke of the fragrant incense for the praying saints. Then in every family let prayer ascend to heaven both in the morning and at the cool sunset hour, in our behalf presenting before God the Saviour's merits. Morning and evening the heavenly universe take notice of every praying household.—p. 519.1

Angels Guard Children Dedicated to God—Before leaving the house for labor, all the family should be called together; and the father, or the mother in the father's absence, should plead fervently with God to keep them through the day. Come in humility, with a heart full of tenderness, and with a sense of the temptations and dangers before yourselves and your children; by faith bind them upon the altar, entreating for them the care of the Lord. Ministering angels will guard children who are thus dedicated to God.—p. 519.2

Prayer Makes a Hedge About Children—In the morning the Christian's first thoughts should be upon God. Worldly labor and self-interest should be secondary. Children should be taught to respect and reverence the hour of prayer.... It is the duty of Christian parents, morning and evening, by earnest prayer and persevering faith, to make a hedge about their children. They should patiently instruct them—kindly and untiringly teach them how to live in order to please God.—p. 519.3

Page 520

Have Fixed Times for Worship—In every family there should be a fixed time for morning and evening worship. How appropriate it is for parents to gather their children about them before

the fast is broken, to thank the heavenly Father for His protection during the night, and to ask Him for His help and guidance and watch care during the day! How fitting, also, when evening comes, for parents and children to gather once more before Him and thank Him for the blessings of the day that is past!—p. 520.1

Do Not Be Governed by Circumstances—Family worship should not be governed by circumstances. You are not to pray occasionally and, when you have a large day’s work to do, neglect it. In thus doing you lead your children to look upon prayer as of no special consequence. Prayer means very much to the children of God, and thank offerings should come up before God morning and evening. Says the psalmist, “O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.”—p. 520.2

Fathers and mothers, however pressing your business, do not fail to gather your family around God’s altar. Ask for the guardianship of holy angels in your home. Remember that your dear ones are exposed to temptations.—p. 520.3

In our efforts for the comfort and happiness of guests, let us not overlook our obligations to God. The hour of prayer should not be neglected for any consideration. Do not talk and amuse yourselves till all are too weary to enjoy the season of devotion. To do this is to present to God a lame offering. At an early hour of the evening, when we can pray unhurriedly and understandingly, we should present our supplications and raise our voices in happy, grateful praise.—p. 520.4

Page 521

Let all who visit Christians see that the hour of prayer is the most precious, the most sacred, and the happiest hour of the day. These seasons of devotion exert a refining, elevating influence upon all who participate in them. They bring a peace and rest grateful to the spirit.—p. 521.1

Children to Respect the Worship Hour—Your children should be educated to be kind, thoughtful of others, gentle, easy to be entreated, and, above everything else, to respect religious things and feel the importance of the claims of God. They should be taught to respect the hour of prayer; they should be required to rise in the morning so as to be present at family worship.—p. 521.2

Make the Worship Period Interesting—The father, who is the priest of his household, should conduct the morning and evening worship. There is no reason why this should not be the most interesting and enjoyable exercise of the home life, and God is dishonored when it is

made dry and irksome. Let the seasons of family worship be short and spirited. Do not let your children or any member of your family dread them because of their tediousness or lack of interest. When a long chapter is read and explained and a long prayer offered, this precious service becomes wearisome, and it is a relief when it is over.—p. 521.3

It should be the special object of the heads of the family to make the hour of worship intensely interesting. By a little thought and careful preparation for this season, when we come into the presence of God, family worship can be made pleasant and will be fraught with results that eternity alone will reveal. Let the father select a portion of Scripture that is interesting and easily understood; a few verses will be sufficient to furnish a lesson which may be studied and practiced through the day. Questions may be asked, a few earnest, interesting remarks made, or incident, short and to the point, may be brought in by way of illustration. At least a few verses of spirited song may be sung, and the prayer offered should be short and pointed. The one who leads in prayer should not pray about everything, but should express his needs in simple words and praise God with thanksgiving.—p. 521.4

Page 522

In arousing and strengthening a love for Bible study, much depends on the use of the hour of worship. The hours of morning and evening worship should be the sweetest and most helpful of the day. Let it be understood that into these hours no troubled, unkind thoughts are to intrude; that parents and children assemble to meet with Jesus and to invite into the home the presence of holy angels. Let the services be brief and full of life, adapted to the occasion, and varied from time to time. Let all join in the Bible reading and learn and often repeat God's law. It will add to the interest of the children if they are sometimes permitted to select the reading. Question them upon it, and let them ask questions. Mention anything that will serve to illustrate its meaning. When the service is not thus made too lengthy, let the little ones take part in prayer, and let them join in song, if it be but a single verse.—p. 522.1

Pray Clearly and Distinctly—By your own example teach your children to pray with clear, distinct voice. Teach them to lift their heads from the chair and never to cover their faces with their hands. Thus they can offer their simple prayers, repeating the Lord's prayer in concert.—p. 522.2

Page 523

The Power of Music—The history of the songs of the Bible is full of suggestion as to the uses and benefits of music and song. Music is often perverted to serve purposes of evil, and it thus becomes one of the most alluring agencies of temptation. But, rightly employed, it is a

precious gift of God, designed to uplift the thoughts to high and noble themes, to inspire and elevate the soul....—p. 523.1

It is one of the most effective means of impressing the heart with spiritual truth. How often to the soul hard-pressed and ready to despair memory recalls some word of God's—the long-forgotten burden of a childhood song—and temptations lose their power, life takes on new meaning and new purpose, and courage and gladness are imparted to other souls!—p. 523.2

The value of song as a means of education should never be lost sight of. Let there be singing in the home, of songs that are sweet and pure, and there will be fewer words of censure and more of cheerfulness and hope and joy. Let there be singing in the school; and the pupils will be drawn closer to God, to their teachers, and to one another.—p. 523.3

As a part of religious service singing is as much an act of worship as is prayer. Indeed, many a song is prayer. If the child is taught to realize this, he will think more of the meaning of the words he sings and will be more susceptible to their power.—p. 523.4

Instrumental and Vocal—Evening and morning join with your children in God's worship, reading His Word and singing His praise. Teach them to repeat God's law. Concerning the commandments the Israelites were instructed: "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." Accordingly Moses directed the Israelites to set the words of the law to music. While the older children played on instruments, the younger ones marched, singing in concert the song of God's commandments. In later years they retained in their minds the words of the law which they learned during childhood.—p. 523.5

Page 524

If it was essential for Moses to embody the commandments in sacred song, so that as they marched in the wilderness, the children could learn to sing the law verse by verse, how essential it is at this time to teach our children God's Word! Let us come up to the help of the Lord, instructing our children to keep the commandments to the letter. Let us do everything in our power to make music in our homes, that God may come in.—p. 524.1

Special Worship Period for Sabbath—At family worship [on Sabbath] let the children take a part. Let all bring their Bibles and each read a verse or two. Then let some familiar hymn be sung, followed by prayer. For this, Christ has given a model. The Lord's Prayer was not intended to be repeated merely as a form, but it is an illustration of what our prayers should be—simple, earnest, and comprehensive. In a simple petition tell the Lord your needs and

express gratitude for His mercies. Thus you invite Jesus as a welcome guest into your home and heart. In the family long prayers concerning remote objects are not in place. They make the hour of prayer a weariness, when it should be regarded as a privilege and blessing. Make the season one of interest and joy.—p. 524.2

Page 525

More Prayer Means Less Punishment—We should pray to God much more than we do. There is great strength and blessing in praying together in our families, with and for our children. When my children have done wrong, and I have talked with them kindly and then prayed with them, I have never found it necessary after that to punish them. Their hearts would melt in tenderness before the Holy Spirit that came in answer to prayer.—p. 525.1

Benefits of Solitary Prayer—It was in hours of solitary prayer that Jesus in His earth-life received wisdom and power. Let the youth follow His example in finding at dawn and twilight a quiet season for communion with their Father in heaven. And throughout the day let them lift up their hearts to God. At every step of our way He says, “I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand; ... fear not; I will help thee.” Isaiah 41:13. Could our children learn these lessons in the morning of their years, what freshness and power, what joy and sweetness, would be brought into their lives!—p. 525.2

The Gates of Heaven Are Open to Every Mother—When Christ bowed on the banks of Jordan after His baptism and offered up prayer in behalf of humanity, the heavens were opened; and the Spirit of God, like a dove of burnished gold, encircled the form of the Saviour; and a voice came from heaven which said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”—p. 525.3

What significance does this have for you? It says that heaven is open to your prayers. It says that you are accepted in the Beloved. The gates are open for every mother who would lay her burden at the Saviour’s feet. It says that Christ has encircled the race with His human arm, and with His divine arm He has grasped the throne of the Infinite and united man with God, and earth with heaven.—p. 525.4

Page 526

The prayers of Christian mothers are not disregarded by the Father of all, who sent His Son to the earth to ransom a people for Himself. He will not turn away your petitions and leave you and yours to the buffetings of Satan in the great day of final conflict. It is for you to work with simplicity and faithfulness, and God will establish the work of your hands.—p.526.1

Growing Together

1. How can parents build a wall of protection around their children in those dangerous times (519.3)? Do you believe that this “wall” will protect them from all physical dangers?

2. According to 517.1, what kind of preparation, of paramount importance, is to be provided for our children? Who will be accountable if they fail to receive this preparation?

3. Who, according to the inspired texts (518.4; 519.2; 521.3), is specifically mentioned as the one appointed to lead the family worship? Why do you believe it must be so?

4. CASE STUDY: Sandy feels very discouraged. She is married to an Adventist husband who does not assume his task of leading the family worship and motivating their two teenagers to wake up and come to family worship. When she invites him to worship, he usually remains in bed until the last minute and sometimes does not

even come. Keeping in mind —p. 518.4 and —p. 519.2, what suggestions would you give her? Should she complain and help him understand his role?

5. CASE STUDY: Mark, age 18, says he is too tired to attend family worship every morning because he arrives home late from school the night before. After reading —p. 519.3 and —p. 521.2, what suggestions would you give to his parents? What could be the consequences if they leave him in bed and require only the younger children to attend family worship?

6. Some families in your church would like to begin having family worship.

Based on —p. 520.1, what suggestions would you give them about:

(1) Frequency (weekly, annually, other): _____

(2) Determined time: _____

(3) Number of times per day: _____

7. What indirect message do we send to our children when family worship takes place only when possible? (—p. 520-2).

8. Martha is about to host her husband’s family in her home for one week, and she is uncertain about what to do regarding family worship as they have no interest in religion. Keeping in mind —p. 520-4 and —p. 521.1, what would you suggest that she tells them? Should she stop her family worship just for that one week and then start it again after her in-laws leave? Should she make it mandatory for them to attend the family worship? Or should her family have a secret family worship in order not to bother the in-laws? What might happen if she invites them?

9. Besides the spiritual and relational advantages of family worship, what, do you believe, may be some additional benefits of getting children in the habit of waking up early in the morning? —p. 521.2

10. Duration: In —p. 521.3, look for two characteristics of a family worship in which God is dishonored, and for two characteristics of a family worship in which He is honored.

[a] God is dishonored when the family worship is _____ and _____.

[b] God is honored when the family worship is _____ and _____.

[c] What is the meaning of each characteristic?

[d] How much time do you believe would be the ideal for a family to spend for family worship and why?

11. Based on pages 521.4, 523.5 and 524.2, how many many parts should the family worship have? What are they? What are they?

12. Choose one of the following age groups (infants, toddlers, kids, teenagers, youth, singles, young adults, adults, and elderly) and develop a sketch for a sample family worship directed to that age group. Your group should prepare to present it during the group report, if requested.

Notes:

Notes:



GOD FIRST
ADVENTIST STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES