EQUIPPING FAMILIES AT GRACE CROSSING CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, TO PRACTICE DAILY FAMILY WORSHIP

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by
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APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING FAMILIES AT GRACE CROSSING CHURCH,
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, TO PRACTICE
DAILY FAMILY WORSHIP

Kyle Jonathan Lewis

Read and Approved by:

________________________________________
Donald S. Whitney (Faculty Supervisor)

________________________________________
Joseph C. Harrod

Date ______________________________
To Caroline,

my wonderful wife and best friend,

without you this would not be possible,

I promise to finish the chores once I graduate.
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PREFACE

While I am the writer of this project, so many people extended help to me throughout the past two years that I would like to thank. First, I thank God for saving me and giving me the desire to pursue worship in my family. Family worship is ultimately about worshipping God, so my prayer is that he will receive the glory in all that is written.

I also want to thank my wife—my wonderful partner in life, supporter, cheerleader, helper, and faithful friend. I would not have been able to complete this project without all of your sacrifices made throughout the process. You were the one who encouraged me to chase after my dream of post-graduate studies. I love you with all my heart.

To our three children, Josiah, Julia, and Paul, who have been the “guinea pigs” of my own attempts to practice family worship. May these times teach you the importance of loving and worshipping God. When I am old, grey, and wheelchair bound living in one of your houses, I hope that you are still carrying on the practice.

Many thanks to the churches and pastors involved in helping me implement this project. I cannot thank enough Paul O’Brien at Grace Crossing Church and Matthew Anders at Landmark Independent Baptist Church for being willing to let me coming in and teach your congregations. I pray it was a blessing to you all, as you all were to me.

I also thank my many editors and proofreaders over the past two years! Some were paid and some helped for free, but you all made me sound so much better than I actually am, so thank you for your hard work. This group includes wonderful people such as Betsy Fredrick, Mandi Ehman, Jessica Shullenbarger, Rachel Bomberger, Casey Zachary, John Lewis, Julie Lewis, and probably several others that I am forgetting.
Thank you to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and all the wonderful professors that taught me there. I particularly want to thank my supervisor, Dr. Donald Whitney, as well as my second reader, Dr. Joe Harrod.

This project was a team effort. I am humbled by each person’s willingness to support me throughout the process. I pray that it benefited them in some way as well, just as it benefited me.

Kyle Lewis

Olney, Maryland

May 2015
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip families at Grace Crossing Church, Louisville, Kentucky, to practice daily family worship.

Goals

The first goal of this project was to help families grow in their understanding of family worship. This goal was important because it is unlikely that families will practice family worship unless they properly understand it. It is also unlikely that families will continue the practice unless they understand its importance to their spiritual lives. This goal was measured by a pre-project and post-project survey, which assessed the participants’ perceived understanding of family worship (see appendix 1). This goal was also assessed through the post-project follow-up interviews, which gave the participants an opportunity to describe the ways their understanding of the practice grew. This goal was considered successfully met if the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre-project and post-project survey scores.

The second goal of this project was to motivate families to practice family worship on a daily basis, with a minimum of five times per week. Most of the families at Grace Crossing Church practice family worship infrequently or do not practice it at all. For the purposes of this project, this goal was considered successfully met if 80 percent of the participants practiced family worship at least five times per week. This goal was measured by a post-project survey, which assessed the frequency of family worship before and at the end of the project (see appendix 1). To determine if the group as a whole successfully met this goal, an average frequency was calculated from the responses of the post-project
survey to determine if 80 percent of the group practiced family worship at least five times per week.

The third goal of this project was to encourage families to utilize four basic elements within family worship: reading Scripture, praying, singing, and a time of discipleship. As examined further in chapters 2 and 3, family worship can be practiced in a variety of ways that may or may not include these four basic elements. However, including these elements into the routine is beneficial to the family and was therefore a goal of this project. This goal was measured by a pre-project and post-project survey, which assessed any changes in the practice of these four elements (see appendix 1). This goal was considered successfully met if the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre-project and post-project survey scores pertaining to the families’ practice and understanding of these four elements.

**Ministry Context**

Grace Crossing Church is located in the Valley Station part of Louisville, Kentucky, which is in the southwest corner of the city. Louisville as a whole has a population of about 605,000, while the Valley Station subset of the city is about 15,000.¹ Valley Station is not a very ethnically diverse city as approximately 97 percent of the population is Caucasian.²

Approximately 54 percent of the population in Valley Station live with other family members and 33 percent of those families have children under the age of 18.³

¹The Louisville, KY population was taken from the US Census Bureau, accessed July 19, 2013, http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/21/2148006.html. The Valley Station population was taken from http://www.city-data.com/city/Valley-Station-Kentucky.html.

²Ibid.

According to census data, the residents of the Valley Station area of Louisville do not have substantial formal education. Twenty-four percent of the residents do not have a high school degree. Another 34 percent of the population has not more than a high school degree. Only 4.9 percent of the residents have a bachelor’s degree.\(^4\)

The people of Louisville, and the Valley Station area in particular, face several challenges. One of the most urgent challenges is the high number of people with drug addictions. One newspaper recently reported that the county in Kentucky with the highest amount of heroin deaths is Jefferson County, which includes Valley Station.\(^5\) Other common problems facing people in this city include joblessness and single parenting.

The racial breakdown of Grace Crossing Church is about 95 percent non-Hispanic white and 5 percent African-American, which is on par with the overall demographics of the community.\(^6\) There is a mixture of ages but the largest area of growth is seen in married couples with young children. About 20 percent of the attendees are under the age of 18, 45 percent are between 19 and 40 years old, 15 percent are between 41 and 65 years old, and 20 percent are over the age of 65. Therefore, the majority of people attending the church are part of a family with children in the home.

There are three main church-based programs of discipleship. The first is the Sunday morning worship service. The service involves a time of prayer, singing worship songs, giving tithes and offerings, and a time of teaching from the Bible. A sermon series generally goes through a book of the Bible in an expositional manner, though at times there are topical series. On the first Sunday of the month, the church observes the Lord’s

\(^4\)Ibid.


\(^6\)Ibid.
Supper. There are also quarterly baptism services for those who have put their faith in Christ.

The second main discipleship program is comparable to what many other churches call “Sunday school.” These Bible study classes last for about an hour. Some of the classes are actual Bible studies while others are more topical. For example, one class may study the book of Hebrews while another cover basic doctrines of the Bible.

The third main discipleship program are small groups, which the church calls “community groups.” These community groups meet at various times and locations throughout the week in people’s homes as well as at the church. The community groups also vary in what they study. Some groups do a Bible study while others discuss the sermon from the previous Sunday. In addition to the three main discipleship programs, there are also other ministries available for members. There are ministries for those over fifty, men, women, students, and children. A group also gathers to help people with addictions.

The church is not lacking in ministry and educational opportunities for the congregation. However, the area this project sought to improve was the practice of family worship with an emphasis on spiritual growth at home. Since the majority of people are only at church one time per week, it was essential that they find ways to worship God the rest of the week.

While some families in the church already practice family worship, there has not been any formal teaching on the subject in the past. Some families that currently practice it were doing it before coming to the church. However, the majority of people in the congregation do not practice family worship. The pastoral staff and elders are supportive of the practice and were enthusiastic about implementing this project.

When the project proposal was submitted for this project, approximately 125 people called Grace Crossing Church their home, though only about 75 attended any given Sunday service. However, due to unforeseen issues at the church, attendance dropped by about half over the next year. By the time the project began, about 35 people
were attending on a regular basis. The racial, marital, and age breakdown of the congregation did not dramatically change.

Since attendance dramatically dropped, it was decided that a second, simultaneous project would be conducted at a nearby church. This second church, Landmark Independent Baptist Church, is a mile from Grace Crossing Church and is also in the Valley Station part of Louisville. About 280 people regularly attend each Sunday at Landmark. Like Grace Crossing Church, it is not very diverse, with about 95 percent being white. The age range is approximately: 35 percent under the age of 18, 35 percent between the ages of 19 and 40, 20 percent between the ages of 41 and 65, and about 10 percent over the age of 65. Given the high amount of people under the age of 40, approximately 45 percent of the population has children living in the home.

Rationale

There are several reasons why this project was necessary. First, it is important for families to worship God. Scripture passages such as Psalm 95:6, John 4:23-24, Luke 4:8, Colossians 3:14-17, and Hebrews 13:15 point to the necessity of worshipping God. God is to be worshipped in every facet of a person’s life. Even if there were no benefits to family worship, God is still worthy to be worshipped. Family worship is simply one way in which God’s followers can worship him. The goal of this project was to help families establish the healthy habit of worshipping God as a family.

The second reason this project was necessary is because family worship is historically considered an important practice for the godliness of everyone in the family. As an example, Puritan commentator Matthew Henry stated in one sermon,

Masters of families, who preside in the other affairs of the house, must go before their households in the things of God. They must be as prophets, priests, and kings, in their own families; and as such they must keep up family doctrine, family worship, and family discipline.7

Family worship was an important practice in the past and should be an important practice to Christians today. This idea is explored further in chapter 3.

In addition to the opportunity to worship God, there are also benefits to practicing family worship. The third reason why this project was necessary was because family worship helps parents disciple their children. Far too many parents do not spend enough (or any) time discipling their children. As a result, many children of Christian families grow up to be non-Christian adults. Pastor and author Voddie Bauchman writes, “Our children are falling away because we are asking the church to do what God designed the family to accomplish. Discipleship and multi-generational faithfulness begins and ends at home.”

One way in which parents can disciple children at home is through a daily time of family worship.

Following closely with the third reason, family worship is important because it enables parents to disciple each other. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Likewise, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete.” The very fact that a husband and wife open the Bible and read it together means they are allowing for the possibility to be taught, reprooved, corrected, or trained in a godly manner. If couples are open with each other, they will be able to encourage each other to grow in godliness as the “living and active” Word speaks to them.

Having established that family worship is a good and necessary discipline, the next reason why this project was important is because Grace Crossing Church does not have any formal teaching on the subject. While a few families in the church already practice it, most families do not and consequently are missing out on the privileges and

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benefits of family worship. Implementing a formal training on family worship would help raise awareness to the families who are not currently practicing it and show them how to begin.

The last reason why this project was important is because family worship can be helpful to aiding people in their own personal challenges. Valley Station is a very poorly educated area and has many other challenges such as joblessness, drug and alcohol addiction, and single parenting. While family worship will not solve all of these problems, it will help families take a step in the right direction to turn to God for their problems.

**Definitions**

*Family.* In this paper, the term “family” will be used to describe a group of people who are living together and are related to each other by blood or adoption. Andreas J. Kostenberger and David W. Jones define “family”: “Primarily, one man and one woman united in matrimony (barring death of a spouse) plus (normally) natural or adopted children and, secondarily, any other persons related by blood.”9 Based on this definition, any group of singles living together who are not related by blood or adoption would not be considered a family. This does not mean that they cannot benefit from a daily time of worship together, but it would not technically be considered family worship.

*Family worship.* For this paper “family worship” will be defined as “an intentional time in which the household family gathers together to worship God.” This definition is similar to how James W. Alexander defines family worship: “The joint worship rendered to God by all the members of one household.”10 Baucham similarly defines family worship as “a brief time of devotion before the Lord.”11

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9 Andreas J. Kostenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 85.


11 Voddie Baucham, Jr., *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to
One may protest that the definition of “family worship” is too broad, because similar to the terms “family” and “worship,” “family worship” is a broad term that can entail many different elements. Some families worship by simply reading Scripture and praying while others go through a structured time that includes many other practices. The key is that there be some element of “worship” in the time the family gathers. It is not likely family worship would be worship if all of the elements suggested in this project were excluded.

**Spiritual discipline.** Since family worship is a spiritual discipline, it will be helpful to define what exactly “spiritual discipline” means. In *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald S. Whitney defines it as “those personal and corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth.”\(^{12}\) Whitney says the purpose of these disciplines are for “the Spirit-filled pursuit of Godliness.”\(^{13}\) That is exactly what family worship should be as well. It is a discipline of the family that promotes spiritual growth for the purpose of godliness.

**Worship.** D. A. Carson defines worship as

> the proper response of all moral, sentient beings to God, ascribing all honor and worth to their Creator-God precisely because he is worthy, delightfully so. . . . Human worship of God properly responds to the redemptive provisions that God has graciously made. While all true worship is God-centered, Christian worship is no less Christ-centered.\(^{14}\)

Therefore, worship is essentially giving God praise in one’s words (ascribing honor and worth) and actions (the proper response).

**Limitations and Delimitations**

This project had one limitation. The project was intentionally limited to a

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\(^{13}\)Ibid.

length of fifteen consecutive weeks, which included two weeks of preparation, twelve weeks of class time, and one week for a post-project evaluation. The participants were encouraged to continue what they practiced after the twelve weeks.

The first delimitation was that the project was only for those who attended Grace Crossing Church or Landmark Independent Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky. The second delimitation was that only families living together were part of this study. This project was open to all types of families groups such as a husband and wife with children, a husband and wife with no children, a single parent with children, or even a single parent with adult children. However, single adults and others living on their own (such as widowed spouses) were not targeted for this study, though anyone was welcomed to the class to learn.

**Research Methodology**

The first two weeks of the fifteen-week project focused on preparation and advertising for the upcoming class on family worship. The class was advertised in the church bulletin on Sunday mornings and announced during the church service. Reminders were also sent out by email. I also personally invited people to join the class. The goal was to have a minimum of 10 adults involved in the class, though ideally 20 to 30 people would participate.

After the first two weeks of advertising, the next four weeks of the project were for teaching the main content. After the four weeks of teaching, the class participants committed to practicing family worship on a daily basis for the next eight weeks. While the group did not meet during this eight-week period, I had weekly contact with the families to encourage consistency and discuss any problems. The final week was a time for evaluation and feedback. During this process, I complied with all requirements from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary ethics committee.

The first and primary method of assessment for the project was a pre-project and post-project survey (see appendix 1). The pre-project and post-project surveys had
the same questions and assessed the participants’ practices and beliefs about family worship. The pre-project survey was given to the participants during the first class in week 3 of the project. The post-project survey was then given to participants during week 15 of the project.

Once the post-project surveys were completed by the participants in week 15, the data was evaluated using a t-test for dependent samples. A t-test for dependent samples “involves a comparison of means from each group of scores and focuses on the differences between the scores.”\(^{15}\) The “dependent samples” in this case means that the same person was examined twice, once at the beginning of the project and once at the end, to evaluate any statistical changes between the answers the same person gives. This was achieved by having the person write their name or an identifying number on the survey.

The statistical changes over the course of two surveys—as determined by the t-test—showed if the intervention successfully accomplished the goals of the project (see appendix 1). For example, the survey results in questions 10, 11, and 12 showed if the four weeks of class time helped the families grow in their understanding of family worship (goal 1). The survey results in questions 6, 7, 8, and 9 indicated if the class time and subsequent coaching motivated the parents to practice family worship on a daily basis (goal 2). Finally, the differences in results in questions 13, 14, and 15 indicated if the families were encouraged to utilize a time of reading Scripture, praying, singing, and teaching as part of their family worship (goal 3).

A second method of assessment was to conduct semi-structured interviews with each parent couple (or single parent) that participated in the project (See appendix 2). The initial questions pertained to the experiences, accomplishments, and hindrances the parents had while leading family worship in the home. The parents were also given an

opportunity to provide feedback in any other area pertaining to family worship. The interview was conducted during week 15 of the project. The interview data was analyzed by looking for themes that emerged from the responses to the questions as well as themes that did not emerge that might have been expected.

A third way in which the project was assessed was by visiting each family in their own home near the end of the project to observe how they practiced family worship (see appendix 3). These observations took place during week 15 as well as one week after the project concluded. In some cases, the interviews were conducted during the same visit (see appendix 2). Seeing families worship together allowed me to observe if the participants were able to internalize everything they were taught in the class as well as practice over the three preceding months.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this project was to equip families at Grace Crossing Church, Louisville, Kentucky, to practice daily family worship. The project had three goals. The first goal was to help the families grow in their understanding of family worship. The second goal was to motivate families to practice family worship on a daily basis, with a minimum of five times per week. The third goal was to encourage families to read Scripture, pray, sing, and disciple children through biblical education during family worship. This project lasted for fifteen weeks and involved a class on family worship, individual mentoring, and time for the families to practice the discipline in their homes. To measure the effectiveness of the project, several methods of evaluation were used, including a pre-project and post-project surveys, semi-structured interviews, and in-home observations.
CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT
FOR FAMILY WORSHIP

The main question explored in this chapter is “Is family worship mandated by Scripture?” Family worship involves a lot of effort and time. It involves a large commitment from parents and children. If it is not mandated in Scripture, then families should not feel obligated to be involved in a commitment that takes valuable time each day. However, if family worship is mandated in Scripture, then it is important for Christians to practice it, even if it involves a lot of effort. So the answer to this question is very important.

This chapter shows that family worship is not explicitly mandated in Scripture, meaning that there are no direct commands saying, “practice family worship.” However, other commands throughout Scripture direct believers to practice elements of worship. When everything is added together, it is clear that believers are expected to worship God as a family. These expectations and commands are explored in this chapter.

Elements of Family Worship

Three foundational practices of worship are explored in this section and are considered the main elements of family worship. The first practice is listening to and obeying Scripture, which is foundational to the other two because it directs Christians how to live their lives. The next two practices are singing and prayer. A fourth practice, discipling children, is explored further later in this chapter.

Listening to and Obeying Scripture

A prominent way in which people worship God is by listening to and obeying Scripture. One may wonder, “How is listening to and obeying Scripture worship?” There
are two main reasons. First, it is impossible to worship God if one does not know Him. Scripture teaches believers how to know Him and follow Him. Therefore, it is difficult to worship God if one does not know His Scripture. Derek Kidner rightly asserts that true piety is “a love of God not desiccated by study but refreshed, informed, and nourished by it.”¹

However, there is also a second important reason to consider learning and meditation forms of worship. From a practical standpoint, one cannot say he loves someone and not spend time with that person. One cannot “love” God (and therefore his Word) and not spend any time with Him. Listening to and obeying Scripture is one way Christians can express their love for God.

Two Bible passages demonstrate the importance of listening to and obeying Scripture as a way to worship God. First, Psalm 119:7-8 is examined along with consideration to several other verses in the chapter. Second, Colossians 3:16 is examined. These passages show that it is important to learn and obey Scripture and these are ways in which people worship God as well.

**Psalm 119:7-8.** James Montgomery Boice points out that Psalm 119 is essentially the “the Bible’s most thorough exposition of the beatitude of Psalm 1.”² This claim is further supported by the fact that 119:1-2 is very similar to 1:1-2. Both focus on how one will be blessed if he does not live in sin but instead delights in the law of God.

Verses 7-8 further encapsulate the main themes of Psalm 119. In these verses the psalmist says, “I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules. I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me!” The first thing to notice is that

the writer says that he will praise God (v. 7). The psalmist says he will praise God with an upright heart “when I learn your righteous rules” (v. 7). Charles Bridges says that the righteous rules of God “include the whole revelation of his word.” The psalmist is saying he will praise God by becoming upright when he learns the Word of God.

This verse shows two connections—each one building on the other—that show how praising God goes along with learning the Word of God. First, praising God involves having an upright heart. It is difficult to praise God if one does not have an upright heart. A person cannot truly praise God if he does not have an upright heart, even if he is doing the seemingly “right” actions. A person praises God with his heart and not simply his actions.

The second connection is what links praising God to the Word, an upright heart comes by learning the “righteous rules” of God. A person cannot praise God if he does not know God, and he cannot have an upright heart if he does not know how to live uprightly. Learning to live upright comes through learning the Word of God.

By looking at the rest of Psalm 119, one sees that when the writer says, “Learn your righteous rules,” it is clear that he does not mean he will simply learn them. Since those rules are going to impact his behavior (“upright heart”) he obviously will do more than learn them. Bridges adds, “The praise of the upright heart will be shown in the holy walk and conversation.” A person who learns the rules of God is going to make those rules part of his life.

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4In one sense, living upright simply involves accepting the salvation offered by Jesus Christ. A person is declared righteous based on Jesus saving him (Rom 5:1). However, in another sense, even after a person is saved, he is still expected to live by certain rules. That is why Paul says, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” (Rom 6:1-2) and James says, “So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (Jas 2:17).

5Bridges, *Psalm 119*, 14, emphasis original.
It is no wonder, then, that after the psalmist says in verse 7 that he will learn God’s righteous rules he then says, “I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me!” (v. 8). Spurgeon points out that these words are “the result of his meditation concerning the utility and necessity of keeping the law of God.” In other words, all of his learning led to a life that keeps the statutes of God.

To summarize, God is glorified in living an upright life, but to live an upright life one must know how to do it. A person praises God through learning and obeying the Word of God. As a person better learns Scripture he is more able to live it out more fully.

**Colossians 3:16.** Colossians 3 begins with the statement, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above” (v. 1). The rest of the chapter includes ways in which the church can seek things that are above. Some of the exhortations he gives are to “put to death therefore what is earthly in you” (v. 5), “put on” compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, and love (vv. 12-14), and let the peace of Christ “rule your hearts” (v. 15). Continuing on, Paul then exhorts in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” In verse 17, Paul again reminds the church to be thankful. Finally, in verses 18-25, Paul talks about how a household should live together in view of being raised with Christ.

The focus in this section is the first part of verse 16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” O’Brien believes the reason “of Christ” is used in place of “of God” is because the letter focuses on the person and work of Jesus Christ. What exactly is the

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“word of Christ?” Is Paul referring to Scripture as a whole or just certain parts of Scripture? Moo writes, “Probably Paul means not ‘the word, or message that Christ proclaimed’ but ‘the message that proclaims Christ,’ ‘the message about the Messiah.’”8 While this message about the Messiah could be narrowly thought of as just the Gospels and some of the Epistles, it is likely he has the bigger picture of the message of Christ in mind. After all, after his resurrection, Jesus appeared to some of the disciples and explained to them “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets” why he had to die on the cross” (Luke 24:27). The message about the Messiah begins with Genesis and continues through Revelation.

It is also important to examine what Paul means when he says, “Dwell in you.” Bruce asks, “Does ‘in you’ mean ‘within you’ (as individual Christians) or ‘among you’ (as a Christian community)?”9 The general consensus seems to be that this passage is about the Christian community and not the individual. O’Brien asserts, “That Word is to dwell richly in their midst,” writing about the collective Christian community.10 David E. Garland expresses the same thought in his commentary.11 However, Bruce is not willing to definitively say it has to be in the Christian community: “Perhaps it would be unwise to rule either alternative out completely, although the collective sense may be uppermost in view of the context.”12

Looking at the passage in Greek makes it clear that Paul is writing to a group


10O’Brien, Colossians and Philemon, 207.


12Bruce, The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians, 157.
of people. For example, in 3:1 Paul says, “If then you have been raised with Christ.” The “you” in Greek, coming from the verb “raised,” (συνηγέρθητε) is plural. So Paul is literally saying, “If then you all have been raised with Christ.” The same is true throughout, including in verse 16. When Paul says, “Christ dwell in you richly” (Χριστοῦ ἐνοικείτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως), Paul is literally saying “Christ dwell in you all richly.”

Given the context of verses 16-17, it is likely Paul has a corporate sense in mind. Immediately after directing the church to let Christ dwell in you (all) richly, he then directs them to teach and admonish each other. However, Psalm 119 made it clear that the Word of God should also be learned by individuals. It is the duality of Scripture intake (personally and corporately) that will have the greatest benefit in a person’s life.

The duality of Scripture intake is one of the reasons why Scripture is so important in a family worship context. Scripture intake is not simply a personal activity. Paul directs people to let it teach and admonish each other. In this particular context he means learning Scripture through singing, but that does not mean it cannot be done in other ways as well. Scripture is foundational to singing, prayer, and other practices of worship. Scripture is also important corporately and in the home. Just because Paul is writing to a church does not mean Scripture study should only be done in church. A family group will benefit from studying Scripture as well.

Putting the two phrases together, one can see that letting “the word of Christ dwell in you richly” means letting the entire Scripture dwell in a person and congregation. The word “dwell” is important. Paul is not simply saying to let it “pass through” their eyes and ears. He also will not settle for simply letting it be among them. He wants the Word of Christ to dwell in them.

The word “dwell” is found in several other places in the New Testament. All of these instances point to the idea of living in something. For example, in Romans 8:11, 13Rom 8:11; 2 Cor 6:16; Col 3:16; 2 Tim 1:5; 1:14.
Paul writes about the Spirit that dwells in a person. In 2 Corinthians 6:16, Paul references Jesus saying he will dwell among them. Looking again at Colossians 3:16, it is clear that Paul has a bigger idea of dwelling than simply being there for a moment. Paul is essentially saying that they should let Scripture live in them. It should take up residence in their lives to the point where it changes them and leads them to sing it to others.

Dwelling goes beyond songs; it is a lifestyle, which is why it is so important that it be in every part of one’s life. Participating in corporate worship is absolutely important, as Paul says in this context. However, it should also be in every area of life outside the congregation as well. One of the ways this happens is by worshipping God through reading and applying Scripture at home both individually and as a family.

What if someone in the family is not a Christian? Are non-believing family members required to follow these commands as well? Since this particular passage is directed to Christians, they are the ones who are expected to follow the command. Non-believing family members can and should still participate in family worship, but it is the believing family members who are specifically called by God to worship him by reading Scripture.

**Summary.** From Psalm 119 it can be understood that learning Scripture glorifies God. A person cannot worship God if he does not have an upright heart, and a person becomes more upright when he learns Scripture. Therefore, family worship should have a major emphasis on Scripture. Not only is it edifying (as is examined in the section on discipling one’s family), but it also glorifies God when His people learn Scripture.

Psalm 119 also shows that Scripture is not simply for the purpose of learning, but for living. Head knowledge has no value unless it eventually gets to the heart. When a family joins together in worship, they should do so with that same intent. They should seek to learn Scripture and then to live it out in their lives. Learning Scripture and living it out in one’s life can be accomplished by simply asking questions like, “How does what we just read have an impact on us?” Thinking through and discussing application of the
Scripture will help convert it from learning to action.

Colossians 3:16 demonstrates that Christians are commanded to make Scripture part of their life. Not just a part, in the sense of giving it one little compartment in one’s life, but in the sense of making it a primary part of one’s life. God is worshipped when people let Scripture “dwell” in their lives, not only in church (as Paul was referencing in the passage), but in every area.

How does a person let Scripture dwell (or live) in his life outside of church? The simple answer is that he meditates on it throughout his day. Meditating on Scripture throughout the day is practiced in an individual sense when a person has his devotions, but it is also lived out when a family gathers together to let Scripture dwell in their lives as a family.

Singing

Another way families can worship God is through singing. In writing about the importance of singing as a form of worship, Boice remarks,

There are many kinds of worship, just as there are many styles of music. But it is no accident that biblical worship, in its Old Testament, New Testament, and subsequent church forms, includes much singing. Singing expresses human thought emotionally, and Christianity is a feeling religion. More particularly, singing expresses joy, and the Bible’s religion at its heart is joyful. True, there is sorrow for sin. There is empathy for those who are deprived or suffering. But there is also joy in our salvation and enthusiastic praise of God, who has provided it for us.⁴

It is no wonder then that Scripture is filled with accounts of people singing to God in worship. In Exodus 15:1-21, Israel sings in worship to God when he delivered them out of Egypt. Second Samuel 6:5 gives an account of David and the house of Israel “celebrating before the Lord, with songs” after they defeat the Philistines. The Psalter is full of calls for people to sing to God in worship.¹⁵ Many of the Psalms of David are

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filled with exhortations such as “But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy” (Ps 5:11). In Isaiah, the prophet prophesies about God coming to deliver his people and when that happens people will sing praises to God (Isa 12:4-5).

There are multiple accounts of people singing in the New Testament. When Mary was told that she was pregnant and then visited Elizabeth, Mary sang a song of praise (Luke 1:46-56). Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn during the Lord’s Supper (Matt 26:30). Paul and Silas sang hymns while in prison (Acts 16:25). Paul makes several references to singing in his letters (Rom 15:9; 1 Cor 14:15).

Given all the accounts of singing in the Old and New Testaments, it is no surprise that there are also many directives for people to sing. Since Psalms has the bulk of the exhortations to sing, the first passage examined is Psalm 95:1-3. Next, Ephesians 5:18-20, along with Colossians 3:16-17 are discussed.

Psalm 95. Boice writes, “Psalm 95 tells us how to worship. Indeed, it does more. It is a call to worship; it explains how and why we should worship.” There is a call for people to worship three times in the eleven verses (vv. 1, 2, and 6). Verse 3 explains why people should praise God: “For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.” People are to worship God because he is a great God and above all other gods. Verse 7 gives a second reason why God should be worshipped: “For he is our God.” This was originally a reference to God being the shepherd over Israel, but Jesus makes it clear in John 10 that he is the good shepherd and anyone who follows him is part of his flock. Therefore all people who follow Christ should worship God as “our God.”

105:2; 108:1, 3; 119:172; 132:9, 16; 135:3; 137:3-4; 138:1, 5; 144:9; 146:2; 147:1; 149:1, 3, 5.

16Luke does not specifically say that Mary sang the words, but scholars have traditionally assumed that it was a song.

17Boice, Psalms 42–106, 775.
The parts most applicable to the topic of singing are verses 1-3:

Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.  

In its original context, the commentators point to this Psalm as a call to worship for the people of Israel before a festival or on the Sabbath. Erhard S. Gerstenberger writes, “The first two lines here apparently ask the people to draw near, either into temple precinct, more likely for a synagogue kind of assembly a long way from Jerusalem.” What were the people directed to do in this Psalm as part of the call to worship? They were directed to sing. This is important to recognize in order to better understand why singing is important in gathering to worship. There is a correlation between going to worship God and singing.

Do these verses only point to singing when the people gather to worship God in a church setting? In the Old Testament context, going to worship God was typically only done in certain settings. In the New Testament context, worship can happen anywhere and any time. Jesus points out to the woman from Samaria in John 4:21, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.” One very applicable place for people gathering for worship in a New Testament context is in church on the Sabbath. Congregations that gather together for worship on Sunday should absolutely sing. However, it should not be thought that this is the only place or time in which people can worship. Worshipping God through singing is applicable for any group of people who gather to worship God.

18 Emphasis added.


20 Interestingly, Gerstenberger writes in Psalms Part 2, 185, “Normal worship services in Jewish congregations of the fifth or fourth centuries B.C.E. [were] held . . . ‘at home’ on Judean soil.” So the call to worship could possibly have been in a home setting anyways. Regardless of where they worshipped in the Old Testament, the point stands that New Testament Christians can worship in any place.
Ephesians 5:18-20. The next important passage that commands singing is Ephesians 5:18-20. Paul exhorts,

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This passage is similar to what Paul said in Colossians 3:16-17: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

For a better understanding of the context of the Ephesians passage, one will need to understand 5:1-17. Similar to 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Paul is writing to the congregation of believers. In verse 1, Paul exhorts the church in Ephesus to “be imitators of God.” He then spends the rest of the chapter discussing how this looks in the lives of Christians. In verse 2, he says to “walk in love.” In verses 3-13, he tells the church to stay away from works of darkness such as sexual immorality and impurity. In verses 15-16, he again repeats that they should be careful how they walk and make the best use of their time. He begins verse 18 by telling them not to get drunk with wine. Instead, they should be filled with the spirit. Verses 19-20 discuss the importance of singing to one another, singing to God, and giving thanks. Finally, in verse 21, Paul speaks of the importance of submitting to one another.

In the Greek, verses 18-21 have two imperatives (“do not get drunk with wine” and “be filled with the Spirit”) and five participles: “addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” “singing,” “making melody to the Lord with your heart,” “giving thanks always,” and “submitting to one another.” With this in mind, Klyne Snodgrass suggests, “While participles can be interpreted as commands, these five participles describe the results of being filled with God’s Spirit.”

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21 See the section on 1 Thess 5:17 for an explanation of how this passage, which is written to the congregation, applies to the home setting as well.

22 Klyne Snodgrass Ephesians, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand
not exclusive “but at least in this text Paul was content to describe Spirit-filled Christians as people whose lives are marked by singing, thankfulness and mutual submission.”

Given the structure of the passage, it is important to understand what it means to be filled with the Spirit before continuing to examine the role of singing. Paul begins verse 18 by contrasting what someone should be full of. Instead of being filled with wine he should be filled with the Spirit. The point is less about avoiding getting drunk—though that admonition still stands true—and more about being filled with the spirit. What exactly is he referencing when he says to be filled with the Spirit? Peter T. O’Brian points out that the word “be filled” in Greek, which is present imperative, literally means “be filled continually.” This filling to which Paul is referring is not the same kind of indwelling by the Spirit that happens at the time of conversion. Paul writes in Ephesians 1:13 that believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit when they are saved. Instead, Paul is writing about a “fullness” of the Spirit. A key passage in understanding this concept is Ephesians 3:19, in which Paul desires “to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” The probable opposite of what he is speaking about is quenching or grieving the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19; Eph 4:30).

A Christian who is being filled with the Spirit is one who is relationally close to God. Another way of looking at it is that a person full of the Spirit has given more


Ibid.

Paul phrases it differently in Colossians. Instead of telling them to be full of the Spirit, he writes, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (3:16). This will be examined more in the section on Bible meditation.


See also Eph 4:30; 2 Cor 1:22.

Emphasis added. See Eph 4:13 as another example.
control of his life over to the Spirit. As people grow closer to God and obey Him more, they will be more full of Him. Andrew T. Lincoln explains,

Believers, who have already been reminded of their sealing by the Spirit (1:13; 4:30) and enjoined not to grieve the Spirit (4:30), are now exhorted to allow the Spirit to have the fullest control that they are conscious of in their lives and to open themselves continually to the one who can enable them to walk wisely and to understand Christ’s will and who can inspire their worship and thanksgiving. 28

The fullness of the Spirit that Paul is speaking of is not necessarily a charismatic experience but simply a goal for Christians. All Christians should want to be more full of the Spirit. More specifically, since Paul commands Christians to be filled (continually) with the Holy Spirit, Christians should not only want it, they should strive for it.

What does the Spirit-filled life look like? Paul gives some suggestions, including “addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” “singing,” “making melody to the Lord with your heart,” “giving thanks always,” and “submitting to one another.” For the purpose of this paper, only the first four are examined more closely.

First he says “addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (v. 19). The Colossians passage says, “Teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (3:16). What exactly does “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” mean? There is no agreement on the exact interpretation of each term. Clearly the first one, psalms, points to the Psalter, but there is no agreement on how the second and third phrases are different. Lincoln writes that the word “psalm” is used in other parts of the New Testament to refer to Old Testament. 29 However, “hymn” is not used anywhere else in Scripture. 30 “Song” is used several times


30 Lincoln, Ephesians, 345, writes that though ὑμνοὺς is not used anywhere else, “the cognate verb is found in Mark 14:26; Matt 26:30; Acts 16:25; Heb 2:12.”
in Revelation to refer to heavenly worship. Lincoln best sums it up by writing, “Their synonymity makes it all the more likely that the adjectives πνευματικοῖς, ‘spiritual,’ although agreeing in gender with only the last in the series, embraces all three terms.” Therefore the songs that are sung should be “spiritual” in nature.

Moving on to the next part of Ephesians 5, Paul says, “Singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart” (v. 19). As mentioned, this phrase has two participles so it is technically two different actions: (1) singing and (2) making melody. However, given their similarity, they will be looked at together.

Just as the first part of verse 19 directs people to sing for the benefit of others, the second part of the verse directs people to sing to God. Even though Paul mentions this second, the idea of singing to the Lord should be first and foremost in the mind of every Christian when he is singing. Throughout Scripture are exhortations to sing to the Lord. If during worship a person sings only to those around him then his singing is missing a significant step.

The last part considered in this passage is “giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 20). Singing should always be done in thankfulness. In fact, a person who is worshipping God is not truly worshipping if he is not doing so with thankfulness. It is impossible to grasp the gospel message and not be thankful.

The thankfulness is not simply a general gratitude, though that is not a bad thing. What Paul is writing about is gratitude for what Jesus Christ did on the cross. He says that people are to give thanks “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Snodgrass adds, “‘Name’ is a way of referring to what the person stands for and has accomplished.”

31 Ibid. See Rev 5:9; 14:3; 15:3 as examples.
32 Lincoln, Ephesians, 346.
33 See the section on Psalm 95 for more information.
Christians are to give thanks ‘on the basis of who Jesus is and what he has done.”\(^{34}\) Therefore, this verse is not directing people to simply say, “Thank you, Jesus,” but instead to be thankful for all that he has done for them.

**Summary.** So what do all of these verses mean for singing in the context of family worship? First, it is important to see that singing is a biblical thing. Singing to God is a way in which a congregation, family, or individual can worship God. Second, these passages show that it is not only biblical, but it is commanded. Both Old and New Testament passages direct followers to worship God in song. Given the many commands to sing unto the Lord, when families go before God to worship him it should be considered natural for them to also sing.

From Psalm 95, one can see the importance of singing in a God-centered manner. As wonderful and biblical as singing is, one still must be careful in what is sung. Parents should be careful about which “Christian” songs are sung. Not only will it help the family to worship in a more God-centered manner, but it will also train the children to be aware of the words they are singing to God. One can also see the importance of singing biblical songs. One of the best ways to accomplish this is by singing Scripture word-for-word. More will be explained on this in the next chapter.

From both of the passages the importance of singing with joy and thankfulness can be seen. Singing should not be a dreary task but instead a task that brings joy to the heart, remembering what Christ has done. Similarly, it should be Christ-focused. Paul directs Christians in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 to sing unto the Lord. He should be the focus of the singing. When families sing at home, they are singing unto the Lord as well. It does not matter if they are in a church, a house, or a hotel room. The singing should be to the Lord in worship.

\(^{34}\)Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 291.
Prayer

Another prominent area that Scripture points to as a form of worship is prayer. Two passages are focused on that show how and why prayer is important for worship. First, 1 Thessalonians 5:17 shows that Christians must make prayer a regular part of their lives. Second, Ephesians 6:18-20, with a focus on verse 18, shows that prayer is a way in which Christians can become strong in the Lord. Being strong in the Lord is not only a way to worship God, but it is also an aid to allow people to better worship God.

First Thessalonians 5:17. Michael W. Holmes correctly notes that 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 “at first sight appears to be something of a grab bag of miscellaneous exhortations and instructions.”35 There are certainly a lot of seemingly random instructions in this passage. Paul desires that the followers of God should respect those “who labor among you and are over you” (v. 12). After talking about respecting leaders he says they should patiently encourage fellow brothers and not treat anyone in an evil way (vv. 14-15). He continues on, saying that they should rejoice (v. 16), “pray without ceasing” (v. 17), and give thanks all the time (v. 18). Paul then instructs them to not quench the Spirit and to abstain from evil (vv. 19-22).

While this seems like a random list, there is also some organization to it. Holmes puts these instructions into four different categories. He writes that verses 12-13 are congregational responsibilities toward leaders, verses 14-15 are congregational responsibilities toward individuals, verses 16-18 are congregational responsibilities toward God, and verses 19-22 are congregational responsibilities toward the Spirit.36 This is helpful in understanding the flow and order of this passage.

The verse of focus is 17, where Paul says that they are to “pray without

35Michael W. Holmes, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 177.

36Ibid., 178-82.
According to Holmes, this is in the section of instructions for congregational responsibilities toward God.\(^\text{37}\) In order to understand this passage, the first question that must be answered is who Paul is addressing in this particular verse. It is clear that Paul is writing the overall letter to the church in Thessalonica (see 1:1). And in 5:12, Paul says they should respect those who labor among them, writing about the servants and ministers in the church. But is this instruction just for the congregation while meeting or for the individuals when they are away from each other?

Looking at the passage as a whole, it is primarily for the congregation, but should also be practiced outside of the church. Clearly Paul is addressing the church, and most of the commands are applicable to the congregation while they are meeting. However, in the middle section of this passage, Paul gives some instructions that can be carried out in both contexts. For example, Paul directs, “See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone” (v. 15). This command is not to be carried out in the congregation but instead outside the church gatherings. Therefore these commands should be seen as instructions to the church to be carried out both in the church and, when applicable, outside the church as well.

Praying without ceasing is another that can be applied in both contexts. It is impossible to “pray without ceasing” if it is only done in the context of a church gathering. D. Michael Martin expounds, “Clearly, Paul expected Christians both privately and in the public assembly to approach God with praise, intercession, requests, and thanksgiving.”\(^\text{38}\) It should be a dominant part of church and in one’s private life. Gene L. Green explains why this is the case:

The word translated continually appears for the first time in this letter (adialeiptos), this adverb is a hyperbole that yields a sense similar to the Lord’s command to his disciples that “they should always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1) or Paul’s

\(^\text{37}\)Ibid., 181-82.

exhortation to the Romans that they should “persevere in prayer” (Rom. 12:12 NRSV; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2), as the apostles themselves did for the churches (1 Thess. 1:2-3; 2:13; 3:10; 2 Thess 1:11; and Rom. 1:9). Prayer was not to be limited to prescribed hours but should rather be a common and constant element in their daily life.39

Praying without ceasing involves both private and corporate prayer.

What exactly does it mean to pray without ceasing? It does not literally mean that one should pray constantly without stopping. As Green says, it is prayer that should be a “common and constant” element in their daily lives. So Paul is essentially saying, “Make prayer a common and constant part of your lives.”

If a person is to pray without ceasing, then there are implications for his personal life. A person who prays without ceasing has a life dominated by prayer, and one way this is carried out is through family worship. Since worship is commanded and prayer is expected, it makes sense that a family should gather together to pray.

Looking at the verses before and after gives a little better idea about how prayer can be worship. Paul says, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (vv. 16-18). His instructions on prayer are in between his instructions to rejoice and give thanks. Just because they are next to each other in the letter does not mean they should be treated together, but their tenses do point to their association. Martin explains,

Continuity is emphasized with each of the imperatives. “Be joyful” (chairete), “pray” (proseuchesthe), and “give thanks” (eucharisteite) are all present tense, implying continuous or recurring activities. “Always,” “continually,” and “in all circumstances” strengthen the message that these actions should consistently characterize the Christian life.40

Paul says all of these are to be elements of a Christian’s life. A worshipper of God will rejoice, pray, and give thanks. It makes sense that, at least at times, the other two will carry over into prayer.


40 Martin, 1, 2 Thessalonians, 181.
To summarize, Paul is instructing the Christians at Thessalonica to make prayer a common and constant part of their lives, which also involves prayers of rejoicing and thanksgiving. A passage in Ephesians 6:18-20 talks about the importance of prayer.

**Ephesians 6:18-20.** In Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul talks about how a person can be strong in the Lord. In verses 18-19, Paul directs the church to pray at all times and make supplications for the saints. Before discussing what it means, the context should be examined more closely. One question that arises when looking at this passage is whether praying is part of taking up the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit or if it is separate. The grammar points to it being part of the sword of the helmet of salvation and sword of the Spirit. Snodgrass points out,

> Whether prayer is a seventh piece of equipment is debated. Grammar suggests it is not, or else being alert, which is a parallel to praying, would have to be considered a piece of the equipment as well. But the question is irrelevant, for whether it is a piece of the equipment or the demeanor with which the equipment is worn, neither prayer nor bring alert is optional for believers. By definition, to be Christ’s soldier is to pray and keep alert.  

Paul’s mention of prayer, keeping alert, and supplication are all linked to taking up the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit.

However, what exactly does it mean to pray in the Spirit? To pray in the Spirit does not mean speaking in tongues, but rather letting the Holy Spirit guide one’s prayers. O’Brien points out that not all Christians are expected to speak in tongues, but all are expected to engage in Spirit-led prayer. To pray in the spirit means to pray at a spiritual level with reliance on the Holy Spirit under the influence of the Spirit. It is the same kind of prayer mentioned in Romans 8:26-27, where Paul says that the Spirit intercedes for people with unspoken groanings so that they pray the will of God even when they do not

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41 Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 344.

know what to pray. It is also similar to what Paul said in Galatians 4:6 and Romans 8:15-16, where the Spirit is so intimately involved in a person’s life that when he prays he can call God abba. Lincoln adds, “Those who are united in their access to the Father through the Spirit (2:18), who are built into God’s dwelling place in the Spirit (2:22), and who are being filled with the Spirit (5:18) can and should pray constantly in and through this Spirit.”

Paul explains more about prayer in the other parts of verses 18-19. First, he says, “Praying at all times” (v. 18). This idea was already explored in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, so it will not be repeated here. However, it is important to see that Paul again mentions the importance of praying at all times. To Paul, being a Christian involves making prayer a regular and constant part of one’s life.

Second, Paul says, “With all prayer and supplication” (v. 18). Prayer (προσευχής) and supplication (δεήσεως) both have to do with prayer. However, προσευχής has to do more with general prayer while δεήσεως has to do more with prayer requests to God. Boice suggests, “Prayers include requests, but requests do not exhaust prayers. There are many kinds of prayers that we should know about and use effectively.” He then suggests keeping in mind the well-known acrostic A.C.T.S., which stands for four types of prayer: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and

43 Ibid.
44 Lincoln, Ephesians, 452.
45 Ibid.
46 Lincoln, Ephesians, 452, notes that the theme of praying at all times is found throughout Pauline writings, though different wording is used. For example, Paul mentions it in Phil 1:4, Col. 1:3, 4:12, 2 Thess 1:11, 1 Thess 5:17, and Rom 1:9-10.
47 James Montgomery Boice, Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resources Library, 1988), 261.
supplication. While Paul did not specifically mention all four of these prayers, it is likely he was exhorting Christians to use many types of prayer.

Third, Paul says, “To that end keep alert with all perseverance” (v. 18). This is both part of and separate from prayer. A person who keeps alert at a spiritual level is will be continually in prayer. Lincoln explains,

To give oneself to this sort of prayer, it is essential to keep alert. This is underlined by the prepositional phrases which surround ἀγρυπνοῦντες, “keeping alert.” The preceding εἰς αὐτὸ, “to this end,” stresses that the purpose of keeping alert is to pray constantly, and the following ἐν πᾶσῃ προσκαρτερήσει καὶ δεήσει makes clear that this watchfulness is to be accompanied by perseverance and prayer. Yet Paul has something in mind beyond prayer. Being alert is the opposite of being asleep. To be alert is to renounce “the spiritual sleep of the darkness of this age.” It is similar to what Peter says in his first epistle, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet 5:8).

Finally, Paul says, “Making supplication for all the saints” (v. 18). This is the third time in the epistle Paul made reference to “all the saints.” In 1:15, he wrote that he heard about their “love toward all the saints” and in 3:18 he prayed that they would have the strength “to comprehend with all the saints” the love of Christ. In telling them to pray for all the saints, Paul again reminds the church of the corporate nature involved in Christian spirituality. According to Jesus’ words about the great commandment, Christianity is first loving God, but then second loving one’s neighbor. Praying for all the saints is one way in which Christians can love their neighbor.

Summary. These two passages have shown that prayer is a form of worship. First Thessalonians 5:17 revealed that prayer is expected to be a regular part of a Christian’s life. Not only that, it is expected that it should be “unceasing.” Therefore, the

48 Ibid.

49 Lincoln, Ephesians, 452.

50 Ibid., 453.
first way that prayer is worship is because it is simple obedience to God.

From Ephesians 6:18 it was shown that prayer is one way in which a person can put on the full armor of God and take a stand. It is a way in which a person can grow spiritually. Growing spiritually is also an indirect form of worship. When a person is growing closer to God he is presenting his body as a living sacrifice, which is spiritual worship (Rom 12:1).

Given the high importance put upon prayer as a form of worship, it is clear that prayer should be included as part of family worship as well. A family gathering to worship God would be incomplete without prayer.

Summary

Through looking at congregational worship and seeing how it can also be applied to worship in the home, this section has given several ways in which a family can worship God in a home setting. These are not the only ways a family can worship God, but these are three of the most prominent ways. Given their importance, it is suggested that a time of family worship includes at least these three, though anything additional is not necessarily wrong.

The first practice is listening to and obeying Scripture. Listening to and obeying Scripture is worship for two reasons. First, it helps people know more about God and therefore worship him more intimately. Second, since Scripture is breathed out by God, to spend time in Scripture is to spend time with God.

The second practice is singing. Scripture makes it clear that God can and should be worshiped through song. Scripture does not mention anything about the style of singing but it does give some direction that it should be scriptural.

Finally, the third practice is prayer. Prayer is a form of worship because God commands Christians to pray. So praying is a form of obedience. Second, prayer can make a person strong in the faith. Third, people can worship God in prayer through the words they speak. Simply put, prayer and worship are inseparable.
In looking at the passages that point to the importance of learning and obeying Scripture, praying, and singing, it makes sense that some of these can also be combined. For example, since Scripture is a foundational element to knowing and worshipping God, it is fitting that Christians should sing and pray Scripture as well.

Parents Are Called to Disciple Their Children

This section has a slightly different focus on family worship. Whereas “Elements of Family Worship” showed that family worship is important because worship is important, this section illustrates that family worship is important because parents are called to disciple their children. As will be shown, there is a clear biblical mandate for parents to train their children in godliness. While this is technically an all day, every day job, family worship is the perfect opportunity to create a daily routine to disciple one’s children.

There will be three divisions in this section. First, in this section there will be a brief evaluation of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Psalm 78:1-8. These passages show that a clear expectation in the Old Testament that parents were to teach their children in the ways of the Lord. It will also be revealed that this expectation was primarily carried out at home.

Second, an evaluation of Ephesians 6:1-4 shows that there is still an expectation in the New Testament for parents to disciple their children in godliness. It is also shown that this responsibility is primarily for the parents and not the church.

Finally, an evaluation of 2 Timothy 3:14-17 shows that Scripture is one of the main tools of Christian discipleship. Since it is one of the main tools, parents should use Scripture to disciple their children.

Evaluation of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Psalm 78:1-8

The Old Testament contains several directives about and illustrations of parents discipling their children. This section gives a brief overview of these passages
and demonstrates that there was clearly an expectation in the Old Testament that parents were to teach their children in the ways of the Lord. Even though this did not happen most of the time—hence the reason Israel spent so much time wandering away from God and paying the consequences of those actions—there was nevertheless an expectation that parents were to disciple their children.

**Deuteronomy 6:4-9.** In Deuteronomy 6:5, Moses says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” That is the goal for the people. They were expected to love God with everything in them. Then in verses 7-8, Moses says,

> 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. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

While a lot of other points could be made, it is clear that God expected the Israelites to teach the next generation to love God with all of their heart, soul, and might. But more specifically, Gods tells them to “teach them . . . to your children . . . when you sit in your house.” The parents were to be the primary teachers to their children. Regarding these verses, Block notes, “This covenant commitment is to be a family matter.”

The verses also point to the amount of effort that was to be invested in discipling children. The parents were to talk about loving God “when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (v. 7). Teaching the children was not to be a one time thing or done half-heartedly. It was to be an all-day, everyday endeavor.

This is not the first time Moses commanded the Israelite parents to teach their children. Two chapters earlier Moses says, “Make them known to your children and your children's children . . . so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the

earth, and that they may teach their children so” (4:9-10). The “them” that Moses is referring to are the things that God has done for the people in the past. They are to make them known so that the younger generation will not forget about God.

Psalm 78:1-8. Psalm 78 is a lengthy psalm written by Asaph with the likely purpose of instructing future generations.⁵² There is some debate regarding the intent of this psalm. Was it written to remind Israel of their history or was it written to teach future generations? Spurgeon believes it was the latter, writing, “It is not a mere recapitulation of important events in Israelitish history, but is intended to be viewed as a parable setting forth the conduct and experience of believers in all ages.”⁵³ It is likely that the psalm is a mixture of both since in verse 1 the psalmist says, “Give ear . . . to my teaching,” but then in verse 2 says, “I will utter dark sayings from of old.”

The main part that will be looked at is verses 1-8, which is considered the introduction of the psalm.⁵⁴ These verses do a good job summarizing everything else that has been written regarding the expectation in the Old Testament that parents are to teach their children to love God. The psalmist says he will tell “dark sayings from of old” and they will not hide them from their children (vv. 2-4). What are these dark sayings? Tate writes that it is not precisely known, but it has something to do with recounting the history of Israel so that the younger generation will keep his commandments.⁵⁵ It would make sense that these “dark sayings from of old” are the story of Israel’s past in which Israel was unfaithful.

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⁵²There is some debate as to whether this is a historical or instructive psalm. See Marvin E. Tate, Psalm 51-100, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 284, for a discussion on the intent of the psalm.


⁵⁴Tate, Psalm 51-100, 287, writes that vv. 1-11 are the introduction while Spurgeon, The Treasury of David, 2:330 writes that vv. 1-8 are the preface.

⁵⁵Tate, Psalms 51-100, 288.
In verse 4, the psalmist says he will not hide anything from their children but will instead tell of the wondrous deeds God has done. Why will he do this? The answer is throughout verses 6-8. First, he wants the next generation to know God so that that generation will tell the next generation (v. 6). Second, he wants them to put their hope in God and not forget his works so that they will keep his commandments (v. 7). Third, he wants the future generations to not be like the unfaithful previous generations (v. 8). All three of these goals are accomplished by teaching the next generation about the glorious deeds of God (vv. 4-5).

To the psalmist, teaching the next generation was of paramount importance. This was the expectation in the Old Testament, that the older generation would tell the younger generation all that God has done or, to borrow language from Deuteronomy 6, that the parents would teach their children how to love God.

In applying Psalm 78:1-8, Boice writes,

The history of God’s dealings with us must be taught to our children. We have a duty to do this because God has commanded us to do it (v. 5), and we should also want to do it because it is the means by which our children may come to “put their trust in God.”

The sad part is that for much of Israel’s history they did not follow that directive and many generations suffered because they were not faithful to God. However, that makes the directive even more important. It is clear that raising up the next generation to love God is very important, and that is why it is carried over to the New Testament and new covenant as well.

**Directives to Teach Children in the New Testament**

Having established that the Old Testament makes it clear that parents should teach their children to love God, it will now be shown that the expectation is no less important for those under the new covenant. The writers of the New Testament made it

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clear that this directive should continue on. Parents are still expected to raise their children to love God, which will be shown by examining Ephesians 6:1-4.

Paul begins in Ephesians 6:1 by telling the children to obey their parents in the Lord. In verse 2, he says they are to honor their father and mother, which is a quotation of the fifth commandment in Exodus 20:12. By quoting the commandment Paul is making a link to the Old Testament. The church in Ephesus, having a Jewish heritage, would more easily identify with Paul’s teaching since it was also given in the Old Testament.

Then in verse 4, Paul exhorts, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” This verse makes it clear that parents are to raise up their children in the discipline of the Lord. When Paul says “fathers,” he is not simply addressing the male parents. Lincoln asserts, “The plural οἱ πατέρες, ‘fathers,’ can refer to parents in general and not just fathers.” 57 Hebrews 11:23 is an example of πατέρες being used for both parents.

It is important to notice that Paul directs the parents to disciple their children, not the church to disciple them. Paul does not direct the leaders, elders, or church to be responsible for the children; he directs the fathers, or parents. Just like in the Old Testament, it is clear that the parents have the primary responsibility for the raising of their children.

Moving to the next part of the verse, Paul then says, “Bring them up in the discipline and instruction” (v. 4). To “bring them up” (ἐκτρέφετε) literally means to nourish, though it can also be used in the more general sense of rearing or bringing up. 58 Paul gives two areas in which they are to be brought up.

The first word Paul uses is “discipline” (παιδεία). Lincoln writes that this word, when combined with ἐκτρέφετε, “denotes the more specific aspect of this training

57 Lincoln, Ephesians, 406.
58 Ibid., 407.
that takes place through verbal admonition or correction.”\(^{59}\) The second word Paul uses is “instruction” (νουθεσίᾳ), which literally means admonition and is used several times in other places in the New Testament in the verb form “to admonish.”\(^{60}\) Lincoln adds,

The activity of admonishing can take place through encouragement or reproof but usually implies that there is some difficulty or problem in the attitude or behavior of those receiving the admonition that needs to be resolved or some opposition to be overcome.\(^{61}\)

The similarity of these two phrases is Paul’s way of emphasizing the importance of disciplining and instructing one’s children.

However, Paul is not referring to a general discipline or instruction. He adds that it is “of the Lord” (v. 4), which is what makes Christian parenting different from non-Christian parenting. The non-Christian parents will still discipline and instruct their children, but the Christian parent will—if obedient to Scripture—discipline and instruct their children in the Lord. Lincoln suggests, “By specifying that the various forms of instruction are to be "of the Lord," the writer underlines that the education that goes on in the household has a new orientation.”\(^{62}\)

Christian parents must realize they are not simply there to parent the child as any parent might do so. Christian parents are to teach their children with a different mindset. They are to parent with a mindset that has God at the center of their lives.

**Scripture and Christian Discipleship**

In 2 Timothy 3:14-15a, Paul exhorts Timothy to continue in what he learned. The main place that Timothy learned, according to 2 Timothy 1:5, is from his mother and grandmother. While Paul influenced his life later on, he was first discipled by his mother and grandmother in the faith. In verse 15a, Paul says that from childhood Timothy was

\[^{59}\text{Ibid.}\]

\[^{60}\text{See 1 Cor 4:14; Col 1:28.}\]

\[^{61}\text{Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 407.}\]

\[^{62}\text{Ibid.}\]
In the second part of verse 15 until the end of the chapter (v. 17), Paul explains more about the “sacred writings” and talks about their power and usefulness. Before going further into the passage, it is important to establish what Paul means by the “sacred writings,” as well as “Scripture,” from verse 16. “Sacred writings” (ἱερὰ γράμματα) is not used anywhere else in the New Testament. Paul does use γράμμα in several places to refer to the Old Testament, but nowhere else does he combine it with “sacred.” Also, in the other instances that Paul uses γράμμα, it is the singular version of the word, while in this passage it is the plural. It is possible that Paul is simply referring to the Old Testament in a different way. However, it is also possible that Paul has in mind the Old Testament combined with something else. Mounce suggests, “The plural ὑπὸ οἴς, ‘in what,’ in v 14 refers at least to the gospel message and prepares Timothy for the plural in v 15 by emphasizing either the plurality of doctrines that make up the gospel message or the combination of the OT and the gospel.”

Mounce gives two reasons for the combination of the OT and the gospel. The first is from verse 15b, where Paul says that the sacred writings are able to make him “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” Mounce writes that while faith and the Messiah are part of the Old Testament, “It seems doubtful that Paul would say that the OT by itself could instruct Timothy in a salvation that was by faith in Christ Jesus; this would be anachronistic.” The second reason Mounce gives is from the greater context of vv. 14-17. He suggests that those verses “are yet another appeal that Timothy remain loyal to what he has learned, and earlier in this letter this means the gospel message.”

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
Putting all this together, it seems very likely that Paul has more than the Old Testament in mind. The “sacred writings” and then “Scripture” (v. 16) include both the Old Testament and the gospel message. The gospel message was likely the earlier letters that were circulating around to the churches. It is the combination that make a person wise for salvation.

Now that it has been established what Paul is writing about, the passage will be examined. The first thing Paul says is that Scripture is “able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (v. 15b). While Paul says Scripture is able to make a person wise, it is not simply worldly wisdom. The wisdom that Paul is writing about makes a person wise for salvation in Christ Jesus.

It is important that parents and families treat Scripture the same way Paul does. Paul does not view Scripture as a book on proper morality, a history of the Jews, or a nice group of stories that children should hear. While Scripture include elements of all those things, Paul’s primary focus is that Scripture is able to make a person wise for salvation in Christ Jesus. This is why, as Paul will write about in the next verse, Scripture can have such a powerful impact on the lives of people who read it.

How does Scripture make a person wise for salvation in Christ Jesus? Thomas D. Lea gives two ways. The first is that “the Scriptures describe the process of conversion. They outline the method by which individuals can be saved.” The second way is that it will “show believers how they are to live, grow, and serve. The Scriptures will provide directions for believers who want to work out their own salvation (cf. Phil 2:12).”

Parents should never treat Scripture as a book about proper morality, history, or good stories. Parents should treat Scripture as a book that will make them and their children wise for salvation in Christ Jesus. As seen in the next verse, Scripture has much


68 Ibid.
power to it.

Paul goes on in verse 16, “All Scripture is breathed out by God.” What exactly does it mean to be “breathed out” by God? Mounce asserts, “It denotes not the manner of the inspiration of Scripture but rather its source.” Lea adds, “The idea the term presents is that God has breathed his character into Scripture so that it is inherently inspired.” Paul’s intent was not to convey the words were literally spoken by God but, as some translations have worded it, that God inspired the words.

Since Scripture can make a person wise for salvation in Christ Jesus and is inspired by God, Paul then says that the Scripture is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (v. 16b). Keeping in mind all the benefits, Paul is certainly putting it mildly when he says Scripture is “profitable.” Scripture has immense value and should treated in that manner. Far too many Christians take it for granted and give little attention to it. When parents do this they convey the message to their children that Scripture has no value in their lives. Yet Paul says the exact opposite. Scripture is of the greatest importance. He goes on to give several ways in which it is important or profitable.

First, he says that Scripture is profitable for teaching. The word means exactly what it says: to teach or instruct. John Calvin adds that it is also the most important of the “profitable group”: “It will be to no purpose that you exhort or reprove, if you have not previously instructed.” Lea points out that the word teaching (διδασκαλίαν) is used

69 Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 566.

70 Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 236.


15 times in Pastoral Epistles but only six times elsewhere in the New Testament.\textsuperscript{73} There was a big emphasis in the Pastoral Epistles to teach correct doctrine because of the prominence of false doctrine. To phrase it another way, in order to avoid false doctrine, it is important that Scripture is taught. Just as it is important for pastors to teach their congregation, it is also important for parents to teach their children correct doctrine. As Calvin says, if teaching is not done well, then the other parts in this passage will also not go well.

Next, he says Scripture is profitable for reproof. Reproof is different from teaching in that teaching involves the adding of correct knowledge while reproof involves the taking away of incorrect knowledge. Lea explains,

The term \textit{(elegmos)} may refer to a rebuke that exposes the errors of false teachers. It may also refer to the reproof in our personal lives. Whether the reproof is personal or doctrinal, Scripture can show sinners their failures, clarify the point of the mistake, and lead them to a new sense of peace and wholeness.\textsuperscript{74}

Philip H. Towner agrees with the latter part of Lea, writing that rebuke “covers a range of activities all related to the process of making someone aware of sin.”\textsuperscript{75} Whereas teaching is to instruct on correct doctrine, rebuking is to convict a person of their sin.

Third, Paul says Scripture is profitable for correction. This is the third of four parts of the profitability of Scripture and continues the progression. As Scripture teaches and rebukes, it can then correct. Towner suggests that correcting is the positive side of rebuking: “If [rebuking] is regarded as a negative measure, the activity the follows, ‘correcting,’ is positive, aiming at the goal of recovery.”\textsuperscript{76}

Fourth, he says that Scripture is profitable for training in righteousness. It is

\textsuperscript{73}Lea and Griffin, \textit{1, 2 Timothy, Titus}, 236.

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid., 237.

\textsuperscript{75}Philip H. Towner, \textit{The Letters to Timothy and Titus} (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 590-91.

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., 291.
profitable to train because “it provides not only the content of belief but also the guidelines for conduct.” Scripture is practical and applicable enough that it can change a person’s life.

The end product of the training is in the form of righteousness. When Paul says “righteousness,” he is likely referring to right living as opposed to right standing before God (justification). Paul uses the term one other time in this epistle. In 2 Timothy 2:22, he says, “So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace.” In 3:16, Paul is stating that Scripture is useful to helping a person live righteously.

Paul says Scripture is extremely profitable. It can teach a person, rebuke a person of their sin, correct a person from their sin, and train a person to live rightly. Paul sums up the entire passage and profitability of Scripture in the last verse, writing, “That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (v. 17). This is the impact that Scripture can have in a person’s life. It is for these reasons Scripture is so important to teach to children.

Summary

After examining these passages, it is clear that mothers and fathers are expected to disciple their children in godliness, which was the case in the Jewish Old Testament tradition and it is still the case in the present age. Christian parents today must realize they are called to disciple their children to love God. To not do so is to be disobedient to God’s Word.

So what does this have to do with family worship? Family worship is a way in which parents can disciple their children. Meeting together on a daily basis is not only a way to teach and instruct children in the way of the Lord, but it also makes a statement to the children that “our house will serve the Lord.” When the children see that family

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77Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 570.
worship is more important than the television, cleaning, or any other activity it will make an impression on them over time.

**Conclusion**

At the beginning of the chapter the main question asked was, “Is family worship mandated in Scripture?” Considering the evidence provided in this chapter, the answer is a resounding “yes.” Christians are called to worship God regularly. How are they to do this? First, Christians should worship God through listening to and obeying Scripture. Second, Christians should worship God through singing to God. Third, Christians should worship God through prayer. These three elements are foundation to all types of worship in the congregation and the home.

Parents are also called to disciple their children. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, there was a clear expectation for parents to train their children to love God. This mandate continues even today.
CHAPTER 3
HISTORICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED TO FAMILY WORSHIP

Introduction
The last chapter showed that family worship is an important way in which people can worship God. Passages were considered that demonstrated the importance of prayer, singing, and listening to and obeying Scripture. It was also demonstrated that Scripture makes it clear that parents should disciple their children.

In this chapter attention is given to an evaluation of the historical and practical aspects of family worship. In the first part of this chapter, a historical perspective on the practice will be provided, beginning with examples from Scripture and then looking at the rest of history to show that family worship has long been a regular part of the lives of devout Christians. It is also shows periods wherein the practice was less common, often due to external circumstances such as illiteracy, lack of access to Scripture, or a cultural decline in spiritual piety.

The next section examines several motivations of Christians who practice family worship. It demonstrates that the primary reason Christians practice family worship is to worship God. A secondary reason is that Christians view family worship as a way to grow spiritually. A third motivation behind the Christian practice of family worship is the desire to train and disciple children, a task that parents view as their God-given duty.

The last section responds to and contextualizes the material presented in the first parts of the chapter by giving practical suggestions for how family worship can be practiced on a daily basis. In addition to discussing the foundational activities of family worship—reading Scripture, praying, and singing—, how catechesis and discipleship can
be integrated into a family’s time together is presented. Additionally, several other suggestions are given for making family worship successful.

**History of Family Worship**

**Old Testament**

In *Family Living in the Bible*, Edith Deen proposes,

One of Israel’s greatest sources of strength was its worship of God by the entire family. . . . From the first altars to the tabernacles, temples, and religious festivals, we see Israel’s families united together, with the hand of God ever leading the way and with the people realizing that God was molding them to His will.¹

Deen then goes on to describe how family worship was lived out in the Old Testament: “Family worship must have begun long before recorded history when, in the time of Seth’s son Enoch, ‘began men to call upon the name of the Lord’ (Gen. 4:26).”² For example, the first altar mentioned in Scripture was built by Noah after the flood waters had receded and his family had left the ark (Gen 8:20). The matter-of-fact way in which Noah’s altar is described, however, suggests that Noah did not originate the use of altars to worship God. It was likely a practice with which he was already familiar.

Abraham was the next person in Scripture who is depicted building an altar. The first such account occurs in Genesis 12:7, where Abraham builds an altar at Shechem in the Promised Land of Canaan. Deen writes, “At Abraham’s altar, as at Noah’s, the Lord’s words embraced the entire family, and indicate that family worship in patriarchal times centered around the altar.”³ This practice continued throughout the life of Abraham. Deen continues, “Many of Israel’s chief religious festivals were family celebrations of prayer and thanksgiving to the God of their fathers.”⁴ Passover in particular was a time when families gathered together to celebrate God’s deliverance from Egypt. In Exodus

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²Ibid.
³Ibid., 144.
⁴Ibid., 147.
12:24-27, Moses tells the Hebrew people to observe the time forever and to teach it to their children. Clearly Passover was to be a family event.

Israel did not always follow through in worshipping God, either as a nation or in individual family units. But despite this, it is clear both that God set up their society to emphasize worshipping him and that one of the primary ways this was to be done was through family worship. Even though family worship looked different then, its core essence was the same as family worship today: families sought to worship God together.

**New Testament**

As time went on, devout followers of God in New Testament times continued to practice family worship. Kerry Ptacek suggests, “Early Christian worship probably grew out of the household religious ceremonies of the Old Testament.”\(^5\) In fact, Ptacek believes the reason the early Christians met and worshipped in homes was because of their past history of worshipping together as families.\(^6\) As Gentiles were converted, they were in turn influenced by the customs of the Jewish Christians who had been influenced by the Jewish customs.

Much time was spent in chapter 2 discussing what the New Testament says about worship. Christians worshipped through prayer, singing, and listening to and obeying Scripture. As was shown, although there are very few accounts of families worshipping together in the New Testament, there are many different directives to worship God, including as a family. Putting all of the directives together, it is clear that families were expected to worship together.

However, what happened after the age of the apostles? Did Christians still worship God in their families during later periods of church history?


\(^6\)Ibid.
Ancient Church (AD 100–500)

Ptacek answers the question with regard to the Early Church: “The Christian churches in the three centuries following the New Testament period evidence the continuation of Biblical patterns of family worship.”

Several examples are given to show this is the case. What will be seen is even the very early Christians continued the regular practice of worshipping God together with their families through listening to and obeying Scripture, prayer, and singing. Additionally, the very early church carried out the biblical mandate to disciple their children and teach them to love God.

Early church. In his 1841 book *The Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Lyman Coleman provides insight into the personal and devotional life of primitive Christians in the “earliest periods of the church”:

> But it was not merely at noon, and in time of their meals, that the primitive Christians read the word of God, and sang praises to his name. At an early hour in the morning the family assembled, when a portion of Scripture was read from the Old Testament, which was followed by a hymn and a prayer, in which thanks were offered up to the Almighty for preserving them during the silent watches of the night, and for his goodness in permitting them to meet in healthy of body and soundness of mind; and at the same time, his grace was implored to defend them amid the dangers and the temptations of the day—to make them faithful to every duty, and enable them, in all respects, to walk worthy of their Christian vocation. . . . In the evening, before retiring to rest, the family again assembled, when the same form of worship was observed as in the morning, with this difference, that the service was considerably protracted beyond the period which could be conveniently allotted to it in the commencement of the day. Besides all these observances, they were in the habit of rising at midnight, to engage in prayer and singing of psalms.

According to Coleman, the early Christians gathered together as families to worship God multiple times each day. Early in the morning and each evening they would read a passage from the Old Testament, sing a hymn, and then pray together, with the evening worship being longer. At midnight they would rise to pray and sing a psalm.

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7Ibid., 40.


9Ibid., 165-66, emphasis added.
As part of those times of family worship, the families would individually memorize a portion of Scripture and then recite it to each other in the evening. Coleman describes their practices: “Every day it was the practice for each individual to commit a portion of Scripture to memory, and for the members of a family to repeat it to each other in the evening.” While Coleman does not specifically state that the recitations took place during the family worship time, it would be reasonable to assume it took place during this time.

Just as worshipping God on a regular basis was a priority, so also was the training of children. Parents sought to ensure their children knew Scripture well and by heart. Coleman describes it in this way:

> While they were fondled on the knee, and still watched by the careful eyes of their nurse, the first words they were taught to lisp and articulate were the sacred names of God and the Saviour. And the whole range of nursery knowledge and amusement was comprised in narratives and pictures, illustrating episodes in the life of the holy child, or parables the most simple and interesting in the ministry of Christ. As their minds expanded, they were taught, along with the grand doctrines of Scripture, which, according to the approved fashion of those days, were rendered familiar by apposite similitudes from nature, the Proverbs of Solomon, and those passages of the sacred volume which relate particularly to the economy of life.

Just as with Scripture memorization, Coleman does not specify when this training took place, but he already indicated that the family gathered together in the mornings and evenings to read Scripture and sing psalms.

As time went on, family worship continued to be practiced, and it remained a prominent part of family life for several hundred years. Here follows several accounts of leaders and Christians practicing family worship during the early centuries of the Christian church.

**Clement of Alexandria.** Clement of Alexandria (AD 153-217) was a prominent Christian leader who lived about 50 years after the death of Ignatius. Philip Schaff relates

10Ibid., 106.

11Ibid., 166.
one statement by Clement on the subject of family worship, directing Christians who are married to unite together in prayer and Scripture reading each morning.  

**Tertullian.** In one of Tertullian’s (AD 160-220) letters to his wife, he seeks to convince her not to marry again after he dies. For most of the letter he focuses on the perils of marriage. However, in the last few paragraphs of the letter he switches tactics and paints a picture of the wonders of his own marriage to her. While some think the picture he paints is merely an idealized view of marriage, his letter does shed light on what marriage might have looked like in that time period. Tertullian writes,

> How can I paint the happiness of a marriage which the church ratifies. . . . They are brother and sister, two fellow-servants, one spirit and one flesh. Where there is one flesh, there is also one spirit. They pray together, fast together, instruct, exhort, and support each other. They go together to the church of God, and to the table of the Lord. They share each other’s tribulation, persecution, and revival. Neither conceals anything from the other; neither avoids, neither annoys the other. They delight to visit the sick, supply the needy, give alms without constraint, and in daily zeal lay their offerings before the altar without scruple or hindrance. They do not need to keep the sign of the cross hidden, nor to express slyly their Christian joy, nor to suppress the blessing. Psalms and hymns they sing together, and they vie with each other in singing to God. Christ rejoices when he sees and hears this. He gives them his peace. Where two are together in his name, there is he; and where he is, there the evil one cannot come.  

**Chrysostom and Augustine.** Letters penned about a hundred years later show that prominent Christian leaders had begun taking the exhortation to family worship one step further. Two leaders in the fourth and fifth centuries began calling the home a church of its own. The first is John Chrysostom (AD 347-407), who said in a sermon,

> When you go home from here, lay out with your meal a spiritual meal as well. The father of the family might repeat something of what was said here; his wife could then hear it, the children too could learn something, even the domestics might be instructions. In short, the household might become a church.  

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13 Ibid., 2:364-65, emphasis added.

Augustine (AD 354-430) echoed these sentiments, telling his congregation, “It is your duty to put your talent to usury; every one must be bishop in his own house; he must see that his wife, his son, his daughter, his servant, since he is bought with so great a price, continues in the true faith.”\textsuperscript{15} To see the father (or other head of household) as the “bishop” of the house is a logical step for a person who takes family worship seriously. If a father truly seeks to worship and know God at home, then it only makes sense that he will come to understand himself as a “bishop of his own house.” The idea that the father must be the bishop of his own house church would continue off and on throughout the centuries and gain its greatest prominence after the Reformation.

**Middle Ages (AD 500-1500)**

As can be seen, evidence confirms that family worship was practiced during the time of the ancient church. After about AD 400, however, there was about a thousand-year period during which very little mention was made of it. Ptacek writes, “During the era of Roman Papal domination of the Western church, family worship . . . virtually disappeared from the historical record.”\textsuperscript{16}

**Early Modern (AD 1500-1800)**

**Protestant Reformation.** The Protestant Reformation (which began in 1517) brought many changes to Germany and the rest of the world. Two major doctrinal shifts brought on by the Reformation contributed significantly to the return of family worship. The first was the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*. Whereas the Roman Catholic Church believed that authority came equally from both Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition, the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* holds that final authority comes from Scripture alone. With


\textsuperscript{16}Ptacek, *Family Worship*, 46.
The Reformation also brought a renewed interest in Scripture. Raymond A. Mentzer shows one way in which this was manifested in the lives of Christians. “The Reformed faithful embraced the Psalms enthusiastically.” He goes on to give examples of how the different psalms were put to music and sung in church. He then discusses that the Psalms played a key role in Christian life outside of formal worship as well: “Psalm singing could also be heard in people’s homes and, according to popular tradition, while they labored in their shops and fields.”¹⁷ Mentzer later adds, “The Psalter and the Bible, which was another standard feature of the learned Protestant household, became the printed vehicles for daily family worship.”¹⁸

A second important doctrinal shift during this period was the rise of the doctrine commonly called “the priesthood of all believers.” This doctrine holds that all Christians are now priests on behalf of God and are called to minister for Him, which is in contrast to the traditional point of view, prevalent at that time, that minimized the role of the layperson and placed priestly responsibilities solely into the hands of the clergy. The significance of this shift in doctrine is that it changed the way people thought of their roles as Christians. Consequently, many believers came to perceive themselves no longer as second-class Christians but as holy priests working and worshipping within the kingdom of God.

This idea had a significant impact on the way parents embraced their roles as spiritual leaders within their homes. Since all Christians were ministers serving church and world on behalf of God it seemed like a logical corollary that parents were ministers

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¹⁸ Ibid., 37.
to their children on behalf of God. Christians began to see their homes as “mini-churches.” Mentzer writes,

Calvin himself likened the household to a small individual church where the devout father, as the head and master of his family, supervised and instructed the members—wife, children, and servants—in accordance with the talents and capabilities that he received from God. 19

**Puritans.** The Puritans were one of many groups that came out of the Reformation. The Puritans strived to live biblical and devout lives; one of the areas in which this was exemplified was in the area of worship and family. J. I. Packer explains that the Puritans believed there were three spheres of worship: public, domestic (family), and private. While they believed public worship was the most important of the three, they also held the other two areas in high esteem. Packer explains,

Family worship was also, to the Puritans, vitally important. Every home should be a church, with the head of the house as its minister. Daily and indeed twice daily, the Puritans recommended, the family as a family should hear the word read, and pray to God. 20

Family worship was not simply viewed a worthy practice among the Puritans; it was considered absolutely essential to Christian life. It was not uncommon during that time for churches and creeds to include statements to that effect. For example, members of Increase Mather’s (1629-1733) church in Boston committed,

We promise (by the help of Christ) that we will endeavor to walk before God in our houses, with a perfect heart; and that we will uphold the worship of God therein continually, according as he in his word requires, both in respect of prayer and reading the Scriptures, that so the word of Christ may dwell richly in us. 21

While there were likely many who were less devout and did not practice family worship, 22 it is clear that the expectation for pious Puritans was to worship together in the

19 Ibid., 37-38.
home. More examples are given from Puritan writings in the next section when the motivations behind family worship are examined.

**Colonies.** The practice of regular family worship continued to cross over the Atlantic with those who eventually settled in the American frontier. Ptacek explains that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, “Family worship was carried to the thirteen colonies by English Puritans, Scottish Presbyterians, and French Huguenot refugees.”

One example can be seen in a letter written in the early eighteenth century, in which a man describes some of the practices of the Huguenots who settled in Virginia in 1700: “They had (public) worship twice a day on the Sabbath, conducting the service after the manner of the Germans. Such sweet singing I have never heard since. They kept up worship in their families three times a day.”

One notable person who preached the importance of family worship on both sides of the Atlantic was George Whitefield (1714-1770). In one sermon he gave in the colonies, he declared, “I believe we must forever despair of seeing a primitive spirit of piety revived in the world until we are so happy to see a revival of primitive family religion.” Whitefield’s contemporary, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), likewise said,

> Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church, consecrated to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by his rules. And family education and order are some of the chief means of grace. If these fail, all other means are likely to prove ineffectual. If these are duly maintained, all the means of grace will be likely to prosper and be successful.

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Deo Gloria, 1997), 280.


The idea of the family being a “little church” was not a new concept and was consistently taught both in Europe and in the New World. It was held with enough conviction by the devout that even the slaves and servants who served God-fearing families were expected to take part in family discipleship and worship. For example, the Transylvania Presbytery in Kentucky gave the following directions:

All persons under the care of Presbytery holding slaves shall teach every slave not above the age of fifteen years to read the word of God . . . and that the masters of such slaves shall by every rational means in their power urge their attendance on public and family worship.27

Shortly after this pronouncement was given, the larger Synod of the Carolinas passed a similar action.28

Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms. Family worship was a consistent topic in Protestant confessions, covenants, and catechisms. Luther’s Small Catechism—first published in 1529—opens with the statement, “In the plain form in which the head of the family should teach them to his household.”29 Even though Luther does not specifically mention family worship, he makes it clear that parents are to catechize their children.

About a century later the Church of Scotland put together the Directory for Publick Worship of God (1645). Regarding family worship, the directory states,

Besides the publick Worship in Congregations, mercifully established in this Land in great Purity, it is expedient and necessary that secret Worship of each Person alone, and private Worship of Families, be pressed and set up: That, with National Reformation, the Profession and Power of Godliness, both Personal and Domestick, be advanced.30

28 Ptacek, Family Worship, 57.
29 Harald Ulrik Sverdrup, Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1900), 5.
In *The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order* (1658), which mirrors much of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646), there is also a statement on family worship: “But God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth, as in private families daily, and in secret each one by himself.” 31

The *Second London Baptist Confession* (published forty years later in 1689) 32 mentions family worship in a section on worship and the Sabbath. It begins by saying prayer and worship are not tied to a location but instead can take place anywhere: “God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth, whether in private families daily, in secret by each individual, or solemnly in the public assemblies.” 33 The writers use the word “private” when describing family worship and “secret” when describing individual worship. This distinction provides insight into the next confession.

In America, the Particular Baptists developed *The Philadelphia Confession of Faith* (1742). This confession was basically a copy of *The Second London Baptist Confession* and includes the previously mentioned beliefs about prayer and worship. However, *The Philadelphia Confession of Faith* added two new chapters, including one titled, “On Singing Praise.” This chapter immediately follows the chapter on worship and the Sabbath: “We believe that . . . singing the praises of God, is a holy ordinance of Christ . . . and that the whole church in their public assemblies, as well as private Christians, ought to . . . sing God's praises according to the best light they have received.” 34 Since the writers chose to use the word “private” instead of “secret,” it can be assumed that the

31 A. H. Quint, “The Savory Declaration,” *The Congregational Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (1866), 256.
32 Also called *The Baptist Confession of Faith 1689*.
34 *A Confession of Faith* (Philadelphia: The Tract Depository, 1829), 55-56. This confession of faith was adopted by the Philadelphia Association at a session held September 25, 1742.
writers meant the worship to take place as a family, just as they did in the previous chapter.

In 1788, the General Synod of New York and Philadelphia revised the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1729). One of the documents included in the 1788 edition was the *Directory for Worship*, which was a modified version of the *Directory for Family Worship* (1647). The newly amended American version of the document included the statement, “Family worship, which ought to be performed by every family, ordinarily morning and evening, consists in prayer, reading the Scriptures, and singing praises.”

The next section of the directory reads,

> The head of the family, who is to lead in this service, ought to be careful that all members of his household duly attend; and that none withdraw themselves unnecessarily from any part of family worship; and that all refrain from their common business while the Scriptures are read, and gravely attend to the same, no less than when prayer and praise are offered up.

The last section of the same directory says, “Let the heads of families be careful to instruct their children and servants in the principles of religion. Every proper opportunity ought to be embraced for such instruction.”

As has been seen, the Reformation brought dramatic changes to the way people viewed themselves before God and the Scriptures. Christians began to see themselves as priests of God and looked to Scripture—newly available in their common languages—for guidance in living their lives. This in turn led Christians to seek to worship God daily in their homes as well as in their private lives and congregations.

It was also observed that the Puritans, especially, sought to worship God in the home. They considered family worship essential for their overall spiritual growth. However, as can be seen from a variety of catechisms and confessions of that time period,

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36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.
there was a common and strongly held conviction that family worship was important—so much so that the practice figures prominently within official statements of belief for many groups after the Reformation. This conviction continued on into the next period of history.

**Modern (1800-Present)**

Evidence testifies to the continuation of the practice of family worship from the beginning of the eighteenth century up to the present, though there have been various times where the practiced waned for a period. However, over the past two-hundred years evangelical voices have called for a return to the practice. Next are just a few of the many examples.

**Charles Spurgeon.** One theme that continued into the modern era was the ancient idea that the household is a “little church.” Chrysostom and Augustine taught this in the fourth century, and it has been a prominent theme during recent centuries as well. Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892), in his popular devotional, *Morning and Morning*, continued to teach this idea:

> If there be such a Church in our house, let us order it well, and let all act as in the sight of God. Let us move in the common affairs of life with studied holiness, diligence, kindness, and integrity. More is expected of a Church than of an ordinary household; family worship must, in such a case, be more devout and hearty; internal love must be more warm and unbroken, and external conduct must be more sanctified and Christlike.\(^{38}\)

Even the title of the book, *Morning by Morning, or Daily Readings for the Family or the Closet*, reveals Spurgeon’s belief in the importance of family worship.

Though this was not simply something Spurgeon wrote about. He practiced it as well. After his death, his wife wrote about their own family worship practices,

> After the meal was over, an adjournment was made to the study for family worship, and it was at these seasons that my beloved’s prayers were remarkable for their tender childlikeness, their spiritual pathos, and their intense devotion. He seemed to

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\(^{38}\)Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “Nov. 1,” in *Morning By Morning, or Daily Readings for the Family or the Closet* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1866), 306.
come as near to God as a little child to a loving father, and we were often moved to tears as he talked thus face to face with his Lord. 39

Arthur Pink. Evangelist and author Arthur Pink (1886–1952) also expressed the importance of family worship:

It is not enough that we pray as private individuals in our closets; we are required to honor God in our families as well. At least twice each day, in the morning and in the evening the whole household should be gathered together to bow before the Lord parents and children, master and servant to confess their sins, to give thanks for God’s mercies, to seek His help and blessing. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with this duty: all other domestic arrangements are to bend to it. The head of the house is the one to lead the devotions, but if he be absent, or seriously ill, or an unbeliever, then the wife would take his place. Under no circumstances should family worship be omitted. If we would enjoy the blessing of God upon our family, then let its members gather together daily for praise and prayer. “Them that honour Me I will honour” is His promise. 40

These words are even more poignant considering they were written during a time when the practice was quickly waning.

Summary

As this section has demonstrated, evidence for family worship can be found in some of the earliest chapters in the Bible. Faithful followers of God continued to worship him throughout the centuries, though whenever faith and obedience faltered, so too did the practice of family worship. After Christ ascended into heaven, his followers continued to worship him corporately, privately, and within their families. As time went on, the church erroneously began to exalt celibacy over family life. This, along with an overall spiritual decline, led to a long period of time where the practice of family worship was less widespread.

Around the time of the Reformation there was a return by the laity to the Scriptures and several theological shifts that led people to, among other things, return to


family worship. Since then, the practice has continued even despite occasional periods of decline.

**Motivations for Family Worship**

In examining sermons and writings on the topic of family worship, three dominant motivations for the practice frequently arise: to worship God, to grow spiritually, and to disciple children. While other motivations are also mentioned, these are the three most common, and therefore, it is these three that are now addressed individually.

**To Worship God**

George Hammond (1620-1705), a prominent non-conformist minister of the late seventeenth century, wrote one of the first large-scale defenses of family worship. In his opening thoughts, he says this about his subject:

> The eternal, living, and true God is to be worshipped by all. . . . Family worship, rightly and religiously performed, is truly the worship of God; for it partakes of the general nature of divine worship, is the same with it for substance, and has all the essentials of it. That it comes to be performed in families is only accidental and a mere circumstance. ⁴¹

It is no mistake the Hammond opens up his book with thoughts on the importance of family worship as a vital means of worshipping God. This is because the first and most important object of family worship is to worship God. Even if family worship did not also promote spiritual growth or aid in the discipleship of the family, it would still be worthwhile simply because it is a way to worship God.

In his sermon “The Great Duty of Family Religion,” George Whitefield lists five key motivations for worshipping God as a family. The first motive he discusses is “the duty of gratitude.” ⁴² People should gather together to worship God, he argues, not

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⁴¹ George Hammond, *A Case for Family Worship* (1694, repr., Orlando: Soli Deo Gloria, 2005), 1-2. This book was first published in 1694 as *A Discourse upon Family Worship*.

only because they get something out of it but because God deserves it. J. W. Alexander expresses similar sentiments when he says that the primary reason people should practice family worship is because “it is a service due to God, in regard to his bountiful and gracious relation to families.” In other words, God should be worshiped because he is worthy of worship. And family worship is a wonderful way to glorify God within the family. Contemporary pastor Voddie Baucham Jr., writes, “God is always honored when His people bless His name. Family worship gives us occasion to do that daily . . . with the members of our household.”

Another reason worshipping as a family is so important is because it is a way to be “set apart” from the world. English minister Matthew Henry (1662-1714) commonly spoke about how the family functions as a little church: “Churches are societies devoted to God, called out of the world, taken in out of the common to be enclosures for God: he hath set them apart for himself.” However, how can a family be considered a “little church” if its members never worship God together? Hammond points out family worship is one way to demonstrate that a Christian household is actually a Christian household. After all, if Christians are followers of Christ, then it makes sense they would desire to worship God together within their intimate family circles. Hammond goes on to reason,

If the destroying angel were to pass through a town or street wherein Christians and pagans dwell together, it may well be feared that he would not distinguish the houses of those who are called Christians, if God is not worshipped in them, from the habitation of others, observing no signs of God’s special presence in them or any family worship daily offered up to Him.

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Seeking to worship God, then, is and has been throughout history the first and primary motive for family worship. Christians should be people who seek to worship God simply because he is worthy of worship. Those Christians living with one another in families should seek to worship God together. Yet even though the pure worship of God is the primary object of family worship, it is by no means the only reason Christians have preserved the practice.

**To Grow Spiritually**

It was very common in the years following the Reformation for Christians to equate poor family worship practices with poor personal piety. Although family worship was not seen as the only way for Christians to grow spiritually, it was certainly regarded as a key indicator of the overall faith and spiritual health of a family group.

In his prominent book on family worship, Alexander (1804-1859) writes about how family worship can have a direct, positive impact on all those who practice it, but particularly on the father: “There is no one whose soul is so directly influenced by the exercise of domestic worship.”\(^47\) Why is this so? It is, he says, because for a father to teach the faith to his children and wife he must first know it himself. Cotton Mather similarly writes, “O parents, in the name of God, look after your own miserable souls; how should those wretched people do anything for the souls of their children, that never did anything for their own?”\(^48\)

For a person to effectively lead and teach family worship, he must continually evaluate his own heart and repent of sin. In the words of Alexander, simply put, “The long continuance of such habits cannot fail to affect the character.”\(^49\)

\(^47\) Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 33.


\(^49\) Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 54.
first of all of great benefit to the fathers and mothers who lead it.

This is not to say, however, it does not benefit other members of the family as well. Family worship, though led by the head of the household, has a major impact on the children and spouse who participate. Alexander offers several reasons why family worship has an impact on everyone. First, he says, it helps them learn the Bible: “A family thus trained cannot be ignorant of the Word. The whole Scriptures come repeatedly before the mind.” 50 Second, it promotes sound doctrine. Scripture read on a daily basis acts as a safeguard against wrong belief. 51 Third, it helps a family grow closer. Alexander explains that at first this may not seem like a spiritual benefit (though contemporary readers might beg to differ), yet even so, he concedes, an affectionate family whose members are close to one another is both more beneficial to society and more likely to obey God. 52

Growing spiritually also has an impact on the family as whole. Contemporary theologian Peter R. Schemm, Jr., states, “We practice these [family worship] habits together because we long for gospel-centered relationships where the grace of God is rehearsed in our households.” 53 In other words, the closer a family grows to God the more likely the family is to grow closer to each other as well. Schemm writes that while this is not the ultimate goal of family worship, it is one benefit. 54

Growing spiritually within the home is also a great help to the church at large. The church cannot help but be stronger when it is composed of members who are more

50Ibid., 62.

51Ibid., 142.

52Ibid., 165-68.


54Ibid.
spiritually mature. Hammond writes, “The last argument I shall mention to recommend family worship shall be the great service which it may do to the church of God.”

Matthew Henry expresses similar thoughts: “A church in the house will contribute very much to the prosperity of the church of God in the nation.” Likewise, Cotton Mather concurs, “Well-ordered families naturally produce a good order in other societies.”

Putting it all together, family worship naturally brings about some kind of spiritual growth in everyone who participates in the practice. Pink summarizes,

The advantages and blessings of family worship are incalculable. First, family worship will prevent much sin. It awes the soul, conveys a sense of God’s majesty and authority, sets solemn truths before the mind, brings down benefits from God on the home.

But more than simply seeing family worship as a benefit, Pink also argues that a person who does not practice family worship is not fully devoted to God. Matthew Henry believed the same thing. When Henry wrote about the importance of recovering the practice of family worship, he did not say, “You have a busy schedule. No wonder you don’t take time to worship together.” Instead, he assumed that the family’s struggle was a spiritual one, far beyond a simple scheduling conflict: “Let those who are remiss and negligent in their family worship be awakened to more zeal and constancy.” To Henry, a person who did not make time to practice family worship was lacking spiritual “zeal and constancy.”

**To Disciple Children**

The third dominant motivation behind family worship is the desire to disciple children. Throughout history, discipleship of the young has been seen as a major benefit

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58 Pink, “Family Worship.”

of family worship. As previously described, pious families have always dedicated themselves to the work of training their children to love God. One of the most common ways Christian families have demonstrated concern for their children’s spiritual wellbeing has been through their devotion to regular, even daily, family worship.

In general, families who practice family worship have their hearts set on making their home a godly home and helping their children to grow up to love God. However, to achieve this goal parents know that they must be intentional. Simply saying, “I am a Christian,” or, “We are a Christian family,” will not produce a godly family. Schemm wisely notes, “Surely there’s more to the Christian home than a Veggie Tales video on the television, worship music playing in the background, and an unopened family Bible on the coffee table!” Training up children in the way they should go takes hard work. And part of this hard work involves the regular discipline of worshipping God as a family.

Puritan pastor Thomas Doolittle (1632-1707), who was converted under the preaching of Richard Baxter, preached a sermon around 1675 entitled “How May the Duty of Daily Family Prayer Be Best Managed for the Spiritual Benefit of Every One in the Family.” In this sermon he outlines nine motivations for the practice. Of the nine motivations he lists, seven of them directly deal with the importance of family discipleship. For example, Doolittle asserts, “These precious and immortal souls in your families are committed to your charge and care,” and, “Family reformation is a necessary means to public reformation, and to hand-down religion from one generation to another.” Doolittle believed that parents who neglect family worship are essentially condemning their family members to lives of not following God.


62 Ibid., 257.
John Wesley (1703-1791) shared similar sentiments a century later. In his sermon on the important of family religion, he asks, “What will the consequence be, if they do not adopt this resolution?—if family religion be neglected?—if care be not taken of the rising generation? Will not the present revival of religion in a short time die away?”

Spurgeon likewise says, “If we want to bring up a godly family, who shall be a seed to serve God when our hearts are under the clods of the valley, let us seek to train them up in the fear of God by meeting together as a family for worship.”

More recently, Terry L. Johnson gave thought to understanding the cumulative effect that daily family worship can have on children. He offers the following calculations:

If your children are in your home for eighteen years, you have 6,570 occasions (figuring a six day week) for family worship. If you learn a new Psalm or hymn each month, they will be exposed to 216 in those eighteen years. If you read a chapter a day, you will complete the Bible four and a half times in eighteen years. Every day they will affirm a creed or recite the law. Every day they will confess their sins and plead for mercy. Every day they will intercede on behalf of others. Think in terms of the long view. What is the cumulative impact of just fifteen minutes of this each day, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, for eighteen years? At the rate of six days a week (excluding Sunday), one spends an hour and a half a week in family worship (about the length of a home Bible study), seventy-eight hours a year (about the length of two weekend retreats), and 1,404 hours over the course of eighteen years (about the length of eight week-long summer camps). When you establish your priorities, think in terms of the cumulative effect of this upon your children. Think of the cumulative effect of this upon you, after forty or sixty or eighty years of daily family worship. All this, without having to drive anywhere.

Family worship has been regarded as an opportunity for parents to turn the home into a seminary. English Puritan minister Thomas Manton (1620-1677) declares, “A family is the seminary of church and state and if children be not well principled there, all miscarrieth.” He and others believed that if the children were not properly discipled


66 Thomas Manton, “Mr. Thomas Manton's Epistle to the Reader,” *The
in the home it would eventually lead to a large-scale spiritual decline in the church.

Children can learn and even memorize much that is good through the practice of family worship. But intellectual knowledge is not the only goal of discipleship. The ultimate goal is for the child to internalize the information so that it impacts her life. Reflecting on the work of catechizing children, Cotton Mather wisely says,

Be sure that they learn their catechism very perfectly; but then content not yourselves with hearing them say by memory the answers in their catechism; question them very distinctly over again about every clause in the answer and bring all to it so plain before them, that by their saying only, yes, or no, you may perceive that the sense of the truth is entered into their souls. 67

Additionally, family discipleship was historically viewed as something to be lived out. Cotton Mather later wrote about the importance of letting children see their parents’ personal piety so that they may learn to model it. He recommends to parents,

Carry the child with you, into your secret chambers; make the child kneel down by you, while you present it unto the Lord, and implore His blessing upon it. Let the child, hear the groans, and see the tears, and be a witness of the agonies, wherewith you are travailing for the salvation of it. The children will never forget what you do; it will have a marvelous force upon them. 68

Summary

There are three primary motivations for practicing family worship. The first is to worship God, which is ultimately what makes family worship so important. It is also a way that a Christian family can show to the world and to one another that they are Christian. Far too many families composed of Christians do not act any differently in their daily lives than families composed of non-Christians. Just as person who professes to be a Christian yet never goes to church raises suspicion about the veracity of his faith, so also a Christian family that never worships God together prompts similar suspicions of spiritual malaise.


67 Mather, A Family Well Ordered, locs. 486-93.

68 Ibid., locs. 946-59.
The second motivation for family worship is to enable participants to grow spiritually. Family worship offers immense benefits in the area of spiritual growth. The simple discipline of gathering together on a daily basis to worship God will impact a family in ways that nothing else will. It helps the father and mother grow because they are leading the family worship. It helps children to grow as they learn from their parents’ faith and wisdom. Finally, it benefits the church and family, because stronger Christians make for both stronger families and, by extension, a stronger church.

The third motivation behind family worship is the desire to disciple children. As already mentioned, family worship can have an enormous impact on the lives of the children who practice it. It is not the only way that children are discipled in the home, but it is certainly one major way.

**Practical Suggestions for Family Worship**

The final pages of this chapter put everything together and consider a few practical suggestions for practicing family worship. First, the general format for family worship is considered. Second, some additional suggestions for discipling children within the context of family worship are offered. Third, a few general principles are given to help those seeking to establish regular family worship in their homes for the first time.

**Format**

As already discussed, there are three main elements of family worship. The first is listening to and obeying Scripture, which lays the foundation for all other elements. The second is praying, and the third is singing. A fourth element, discipling children, is discussed separately. When a family seeks to worship God, these elements should be the focus of their worship time together.

**Scripture.** This element involves simply reading a portion of Scripture out loud. The passage chosen and the length of the reading will depend on the ages and attention span of those in the family. For example, those with young children would do
well to select a short passage or read from a children’s Bible that has pictures. As the children grow, parents can transition to an unabridged Bible.

It is important for parents to have a system for reading through the Bible, rather than merely opening the Bible at random each day. Donald S. Whitney recommends going “chapter-by-chapter . . . through books of the Bible together.” On occasion it may also be interesting to study Scripture in a different, more topically driven manner. For example, Joel Beeke suggests exploring the Bible in a thematic way: “Wouldn’t it be interesting, for example, to read the so-called ‘night scenes’—all the histories in Scripture that take place at night?”

Once the passage is read it is important to reflect together on the meaning of it. The family members should discuss the main point of the passage and if any other verses or themes of the passage stuck out. This part is important because it will be used again when praying.

**Singing.** The second element essential to family worship is singing. As discussed in chapter 2, parents should aim to sing doctrinally sound music. Beeke warns, “There is no excuse for singing doctrinal error no matter how attractive the tune might be.” Some good types of songs to consider are beloved hymns or even popular worship songs that are doctrinally sound. Those with young children can also mix in popular children’s songs to engage the younger ones—provided, again, that these songs do not undermine faith and doctrine.

Families should also consider singing Scripture. Families can pick verses that already have modern music composed for them, or they can create their own music to

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71 Ibid., 31.
accompany favorite passages. When singing with young children, parents should seek to be engaging and even use hand motions, which can be one of the best ways to help a child memorize a Bible verse.

In addition, it might be helpful to select a “song/hymn of the week” so that one song is sung throughout an entire week, or even a month. This would give younger children an opportunity to learn a complex song well, even if they cannot read and follow along in a hymnal or songbook. An added benefit is that they would then be able to participate more fully in congregational worship since they will come to church already knowing those songs that were sung in family worship.

**Praying.** The last main element of family worship is praying. Whitney writes, “Whether prayer is offered by the father only, or by one he designates, or by the entire family, be sure to pray together.”\(^\text{72}\) What should this family prayer be like? Schemm suggests that it may be either “spontaneous, a reflection of our minds and hearts . . . [or] planned and scripted.”\(^\text{73}\)

One helpful suggestion is to pray about something that was learned or discussed during the Scripture reading time. This will begin to train the parents and children both to pray more scriptural prayers and meditate more deeply on the passage that was read. Whitney provides one example from Psalm 23: “After reading the first verse you might thank the Lord for being your Shepherd, asking Him to shepherd your family through certain events or decisions before you, and so forth.”\(^\text{74}\) When children are young, parents may have to be the primary intercessors for the family, but as those same children get older they will naturally learn to follow the godly example of their parents.

\(^{72}\)Whitney, *Family Worship*, 17.

\(^{73}\)Schemm, “Habits of a Gospel-Centered Household,” 188.

\(^{74}\)Whitney, *Family Worship*, 17.
Discipling Children

Another major aspect of family worship is the training up of children to know and love God. While this is not exclusive to family worship, it is the high point of the family’s spiritual life together. In light of this, several additional suggestions for incorporating intentional discipleship activities alongside the three essential elements of family worship—namely Bible reading, prayer, and singing—will be outlined here.

Catechism. Whitney explains, “Used for centuries by Christians in virtually all traditions, catechizing is a question-and-answer approach to teaching biblical doctrine.” 75 Catechisms can be used with children of all ages, with the questions getting more difficult as the children get older. Books like the *Truth and Grace Memory Book* 76 even supply a plan for which questions are appropriate for children at each stage in their growth, starting at age two.

When catechizing children, it is best to start with one question and answer and then review it during each family worship time until the child has it memorized. Depending on the age of the child and complexity of the question, this may take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. After the child has memorized a number of questions and answers, parents should review all of the previous questions on a weekly basis.

Scripture memorization. Since the family is together and already has the Bible open, family worship is an ideal time to review Scripture memory verses. Each child and adult should be assigned a verse from the Bible and continue to recite it to the rest of the family each night until it is memorized. The younger children can start with small verses; then, as they grow older, their verses can get longer or more complex. Just as with catechizing, parents should allow time for review each week. To make selecting

75 Ibid., 18.

memory verses easier, parents can use the *Truth and Grace Memory Book*, which assigns appropriate verses for each age group.

**Other.** There are a number of other ways in which parents can help their children grow in the knowledge of God during family worship. First, the family can learn the books of the Bible in order together. Second, the family can introduce children to general theological doctrines and discuss their importance together. For example, each week or month there could be a “theme of the week.” One group of themes could cover the doctrines of Scripture, discussing how Scripture is authoritative, sufficient, clear, and necessary. Themes can easily be adapted for family use from a systematic theology book.77

**Chart.** Trying to keep track of the different catechism questions, memory verses, and other teaching tools can become tiresome. In order to make it easier, it might be helpful for the parents to make a wall chart. The chart can include the catechism questions for each child, Bible verses currently being memorized, song of the week, book of the Bible being read, and any other helpful material. In using a chart, parents do not have to shuffle between multiple books or curricula during the actual family worship time.78

**General Principles**

Several other general principles may help make family worship time more successful. These principles are particularly intended for those who have not practiced family worship before or who have not previously been consistent or disciplined in their family worship.

**Regular.** The first key principle is to keep family worship regular. It is much easier and rewarding to have family worship on a daily basis than on an occasional basis.


78 For an example of a family worship chart, see appendix 3.
It is also helpful to worship at approximately the same time every day. If parents and children both know that family worship happens at the same time every day, it becomes much harder to skip. In fact, after the first couple of weeks, it is likely that the children will speak up if they are headed to bed and have not had family worship. It is up to the parents to choose when the best time will be, but it is important for them to pick a time and stick with it each day.

**Mandatory.** The second principle is that family worship should be considered mandatory for all family members. Baucham recommends, “No rogue members of the family get to skip out on family worship.”\(^79\) This may be difficult at first, but once the rules have been established and consistently enforced, things will go much more smoothly. Additionally, if the children learn this rule when they are young, there will be fewer problems later on.

**Short.** It is important to keep the family worship time brief. Richard Cecil writes, “Let them find it short, savory, simple, plain, tender, heavenly.”\(^80\) While it may seem like there is a lot to cover, worship usually will be fairly short as long as the parent does not try to read too long of a passage from the Bible. With young children it is best to keep family worship to 10-15 minutes. As they get older it should still generally take no longer than about 20 minutes on a typical day.

**Simple.** It is also important to keep things simple. Baucham explains, “Family worship does not have to be a big production. You do not have to produce PowerPoint slides or an order of service.”\(^81\) Parents should not try to cover too much material in any

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\(^{79}\) Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 144.


\(^{81}\) Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 143.
one night. Parents do not even have to do everything every night. On difficult nights, it is appropriate to skip the catechism time and just read, pray, and sing.

**Participatory.** Another helpful practice is to involve everyone in the family. When children are old enough to read, let them read portions of Scripture. Have them lead prayer some of the nights. Ask them questions about the passage and make them feel like they are part of the story. The more they are involved the more they will learn.

**Varied.** One of the difficulties faced by families who worship together on a daily basis is preventing monotony. One way to reduce monotony is to change the order of the different elements of family worship from time to time. For example, if a family normally starts out by reading the Bible, they could, on occasion, begin with catechizing instead.

Another way to keep things varied is by frequently changing the various catechisms, Bibles, songs, types of prayers, and locations. For example, if a family is reading one particular children’s Bible they could switch to a different one when they complete it. For the singing it is a good idea to change the songs regularly. Even the method of prayer can be varied. One week two people can pray, but perhaps the next week the entire family could hold hands and each say a short prayer. Even a change in location can make a big difference. Every once in a while a family can move their worship to a different room in the house. With little kids, even something as simple as having family worship on a blanket or bed will help to make it exciting to them. There are many different ways to make the time new and fresh simply by keeping it varied.

**Conclusion**

The goal of this chapter was to show how family worship has been a regular practice of Christians for as long as there have been devout followers of God. It began in Old Testament times and was carried over into the New Testament era. For several hundred years following the death of Christ, it was considered a regular part of the Christian life
to practice family worship. Around the time of Constantine, several factors negatively influenced Christian family life and both family worship and personal worship began to decline as the church became more focused on supporting the piety of professional clergy.

Family worship essentially disappeared for about a thousand years and then began to be recovered during the time of the Reformation. Since that time the practice has been widespread, albeit there have been times when it was less pervasive.

The second part of the chapter looked at the three main motivations for family worship: to worship God, grow spiritually, and disciple children. These are three of the main reasons why families have gathered to worship God for thousands of years.

Finally, some suggestions were given for how to have a successful time of family worship. Practicing meaningful family worship can be as simple as reading the Bible, singing, and praying together. Parents can also introduce Scripture verses to memorize, catechisms, and other teachings that will help the children learn about God. Ultimately, the goal is for God to be worshiped and for a family to grow in the knowledge and love of God.
CHAPTER 4
AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how the project was implemented at Grace Crossing Church in Louisville, Kentucky. The project began with two weeks of preparation. Following the preparation, the main part of the project involved four weekly classes on family worship. After the fourth class, the participants were asked to practice the discipline on a daily basis for eight weeks. While the group did not meet during this eight-week period, I had weekly contact with the families to encourage consistency and discuss any problems. In the final week, the group met together one last time to give feedback. It was also during this last week that interviews and in-home observations were conducted.

The project began on May 18, 2014, and classes began two weeks later and went from June 1 to June 22. The project officially ended on August 30.

Seventeen families were represented in the project between the two churches. Of those families, 7 were from Grace Crossing Church and 10 were from Landmark Independent Baptist Church. According to the survey results, all 17 families had a husband and wife at home, though not every family had both husband and wife present at the classes. All 17 families indicated that both spouses were Christian.

Three of the 17 families had no children. One of the families had adult children no longer living in the home. The remaining families had children living in the home ranging from 5 months to 21 of age, with the average age being 7. Ten families had multiple children in the home while 4 families had only 1 child living in the home.

Three goals established how the project would be implemented. The first goal
was to help the families grow in their understanding of family worship. The second goal was to motivate families to practice family worship on a daily basis, with a minimum of five times per week. The third goal was to encourage families to read Scripture, pray, sing, and have a time of biblical education during their family worship.

**Weeks 1 and 2**

Leading up to weeks 1 and 2, the congregation was notified several times about the upcoming class on family worship. However, beginning at week 1, an announcement was made during church, emails were sent out, and personal invitations were extended to all potential participants. Invitations were also given at the other church, Landmark Independent Baptist Church (LIBC), by their senior pastor.

**Weeks 3 through 6**

**Teaching Material**

During each class the material was shared in several ways. First, the information was taught in a traditional classroom style where I stood in front of the class and taught the information. Second, a handout given to each participant. The handout had a basic outline of the main information with certain key words taken out. Third, the important information was provided in a PowerPoint presentation. Fourth, there was an opportunity for participants to discuss the information and ask questions. Finally, the participants were asked to practice during the week at home what they learned from the class.

**Pre-Project and Post-Project Survey**

The main forms of assessment for the project were a pre- and post-project survey (see appendix 1). One survey was completed for each family at the beginning and end of the project.

Questions 1 through 5 sought to get basic demographic information to make sure that the participants met the criteria to be part of the project. The participant’s name or identifying number was asked in order to match the person with the survey’s pre- and
post-project. Matching the surveys allowed for a t-test with dependent samples to be conducted (see chap. 5).

Questions 6 through 9 were designed to find out the participant’s current degree of involvement with family worship. Each of the four questions asked how often the person practiced one of the four elements of family worship (Scripture, prayer, singing, and discipleship). For the pre-project survey this part of the test showed what the participant did prior to the class while the post-project survey showed what the participant did eight weeks after the class.

Questions 10 through 15 focused on the participants’ beliefs and understanding of family worship. Questions 10 through 12 pertained to the participants’ understanding of how to practice family worship. Questions 13 through 15 focused on the participants’ beliefs about family worship.

Class 1

At the beginning of the first class, a pre-project survey was handed out to the participants (see appendix 1). After each family completed the survey, there was a time for everyone to introduce themselves. Once the introductions were complete, the teaching time began (see appendix 5 for an overview of each lesson).

The goal of the first class was to give the participants the basic information they needed in order to immediately be able to do the first three elements of family worship (Scripture, prayer, singing). The class began with an overview of the definition of family worship. As stated in chapter 2, family worship is “an intentional time in which the household family gathers together to worship God.” Several other definitions were explored as well. It was established that historically, family worship includes singing, Scripture, prayer, and discipling children, though the last element would not be examined until the third class.

I explained what the first three elements may look like during a “typical” family worship. First, the class was encouraged to read Scripture together and always
look for the most important verse or main point in the passage. Parents with young children were encouraged to use children’s Bibles while those with older kids were encouraged to use a regular Bible. Several books and other resources were suggested.

The next element explained was singing. Since musical style varies so much depending on culture and preference, less emphasis was placed on the type of music and more emphasis was placed on the words. While the class was told to pick songs that engaged children and adults, they were encouraged to look for songs that had biblically-sound doctrine. Some time was also spent on how they might sing Scripture.

The third element explored was prayer. The class was told to focus on praying one of the main points or themes of the Scripture passage they had just read. They were also encouraged to get into the habit of praying for other people, such as missionaries, their pastor, or others in need.

The last part of the class was spent going over the benefits and common questions about family worship. The class was then told to practice the first three elements each day with their families. While no biblical or historical support had been given yet, the class had a good foundation for how to complete the first three elements of family worship.

Class 2

The second class focused on giving a biblical foundation for the first three elements of family worship. Before looking at passages about the three elements, I first explained how important worship is to God. For example, Christians are called to love God (Deut 6:4-6), give God glory (Isa 43:7, 21), and worship him (John 4:23-24). Scripture makes it clear that Christians are to worship God. Family worship is one way—though certainly not the only way—they carry out this command.

1The first question, “What if I have children of multiple ages?” comes from Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship: In the Bible, in History and in Your Home* (Shepherdsville, KY: The Center for Biblical Spirituality, 2005), 22.
So how do people worship God in a family context? Several passages were given to support the idea that Christians are called to read Scripture, sing, and pray. First, Colossians 3:16, Psalm 1, and Psalm 119:7-8 were examined to show the importance of reading and obeying Scripture. Next, Psalm 95:1-3 and Ephesians 5:18-20 were examined to show how God calls people to sing praise to God. Finally, 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and Ephesians 6:18 were examined to show the importance of prayer.

Since Scripture and prayer are two major elements of family worship, some time was also spent exploring how the two elements can be incorporated together. The main point was to help the class see that Scripture can, and should, guide one’s prayers. I gave several suggestions to help them pray Scripture in their time of family worship.

Class 3

After spending two weeks on the first three elements of family worship (Scripture, prayer, and singing), it was time to explore the fourth element of family worship: discipleship. The main idea is that throughout Scripture there was an expectation for parents to disciple their children. It was first explained that this was an expectation in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 6:5-9 and Psalm 78:1-8 were the two main passages explored in the Old Testament, though several others were mentioned. I then explained that the expectation was still present in the New Testament. Ephesians 6:4 was the main passages examined, though 1 Timothy 3:4-5 and 2 Timothy 3:14-15 were also mentioned.

After the importance of discipleship was explained from a scriptural perspective, I then showed how this can be done in the context of family worship. Discipleship should take place throughout the day and is not exclusive to family worship. However, since families will meet each day to worship God, this is the ideal time to

2The main teaching themes from this part of the class came from Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 27-64.
incorporate elements of discipleship.

While there are an inexhaustible number of ways families can disciple their children during family worship, several suggestions were given. First, the parents were encouraged to have a weekly or biweekly chart to keep track of everything they want to teach their children during that week (see an example in appendix 4). Second, the parents were directed to catechize their children. Several catechisms were suggested.³ Third, parents were told to incorporate Scripture memorization. Finally, parents were encouraged to sing doctrinally sound songs that will be spiritually edifying for the family. For each of these aspects, suggestions were given to show the parents how they could best implement them in their own family context.

Class 4

The focus of the last class was on how family worship has been an important part of the lives of devout Christians since New Testament times. Instead of giving a dry history of family worship, the class was guided through history by the writings of other historians and pastors. Quotes from Tertullian, Augustine, Martin Luther, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Spurgeon, along with others, were given to show how devout Christians made family worship a priority in their home. I also showed how many confessions made family worship mandatory in their denomination or church.

Based on all of the information, several motivations for Christians having family worship were explored. The first and primary motivation was that people wanted to worship God. I explained that even if family worship did not have other benefits, such as helping parents and children grow in their faith, the discipline would still be important because it is a way to worship God.

However, family worship does have many benefits. Thus the second

motivation I presented was that family worship helps people grow spiritually. Spending time in Scripture each day is bound to have a positive long-term impact. Third, family worship is a great way to disciple children. Christians have historically believed that if parents were not discipling their children through family worship, there was little hope for the souls of those children. In some traditions, church leaders were expected to discipline fathers for not practicing family worship.4

Weeks 7 through 15

Weekly Follow-Up

After the four weeks of class were finished, the participants were challenged to commit to having family worship each day for the next eight weeks. Each week, the participants were contacted either by phone or email to check on their progress and listen to any concerns. Suggestions were given for overcoming any problems.

Most of the contact was brief, and families were able to go through the eight weeks without expressing any problems or concerns. Most of the questions came up after the first class as parents tried to incorporate all four elements of family worship for the first time. There were several questions about how to manage young children who misbehave during family worship. Some parents also had questions about older children and how to avoid monotony after doing family worship for several weeks. One father asked about having family worship after he just had a big argument with his son. Another family missed several days in a row and needed help getting back into the habit of having family worship.

4“He is to be gravely and sadly reproved by the session; after which reproof, if he be found still to neglect Family-worship, let him be, for his obstinacy in such an offence, suspended and debarred from the Lord’s supper, as being justly esteemed unworthy to communicate therein, till he amend.” “The Directory for Family-Worship,” The Confession of Faith (Edinburgh: Sir D. Hunter Blair and J. Bruce, 1815), 594. Approved in 1647.
Final Meeting and Evaluation

After eight weeks of practicing family worship, the class gathered back together one last time to discuss how things went. It was during this session that each family completed the post-project survey (see appendix 1). When the meeting was complete, some of the participants stayed to be part of the post-project interview (see appendix 2).

There was no new instruction during this final meeting. The time was spent celebrating the completion of the class and sharing experiences from worship as a family at home. This time of sharing was very encouraging to many of the participants because it helped them see what others were doing. It also allowed everyone to hear what worked and what did not work. For example, several of the parents with young children shared the various times of the day they tried to have family worship. One family tried it during dinner while another family tried it immediately after dinner. After much trial and error, it was decided by several parents that the best time to have family worship with young kids is right before starting the bedtime routine.

Post-Project Interview

The post-project interview was a semi-structured interview for each participant or couple. The questions were designed to find out how confident the participant felt in practicing family worship as well as to identify struggles the participant might have had with the discipline. These answers helped determine if goals 2 and 3 were met and, if they were not, provided some insight into the reasons why the goals were not met.

In-Home Observation

The final method of assessment was an in-home observation, which allowed the participants to demonstrate how they internalized the classroom instruction and practiced the discipline in their own home. The goal was to complete these observations during week 15, but some were not completed until one week after the project ended.

The in-home observations were assessed through a rubric (see appendix 3).
This rubric sought to assess if the participants were able to learn what was taught in the classroom setting and then apply it into their homes.

**Conclusion**

This chapter described how the project was implemented at Grace Crossing Church in Louisville, Kentucky. The project was implemented as originally planned in chapter 1 with no major variations to the plan.

The project began on May 18, 2014, and officially ended on August 30, 2014. Seventeen families took part in the project, though some of the participation came from only one of the spouses. Participation was, for the most part, consistent among participants throughout the four weeks of class.

The project began with two weeks of preparation. Following the preparation, the main part of the project involved four weekly classes on family worship. After the fourth class, the participants were asked to practice the discipline on a daily basis for eight weeks. In the final week, the group met together to give feedback and celebrate the conclusion of the class. It was also during this last week (and one week after) that the interviews and in-home observations were conducted.

Three goals established how the project was implemented. The first goal was to help the families grow in their understanding of family worship. The second goal was to motivate families to practice family worship on a daily basis, with a minimum of five times per week. The third goal was to encourage families to read Scripture, pray, sing, and have a time of biblical education during their family worship.
CHAPTER 5
EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT AND RESULTS

Introduction

This final chapter evaluates both the results of the project as well as the project as a whole. Several questions are explored. First, and most importantly, were the three goals of the project successfully met? Second, was the purpose of the project fulfilled? Third, what were the strengths of the project? Fourth, what were the weaknesses of the project? Fifth, if the project were to be conducted again, what would be done differently? Finally, some reflections on what was learned during this project are offered.

Overview

The first and primary way of assessing if this goal was met is by analyzing the responses in the pre-project and post-project survey (see appendix 1). Since participants answered the questions based on a Likert-scale, each possible answer was given a number. For questions 6 through 9, there were five choices, ranging from “0 times per week” to “6-7 times per week.” The first choice was assigned the number 1 and then numbering continued to the last choice, which was assigned a 5. For questions 10 through 15, there were six choices ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” These were also assigned a number from 1 to 6.

Once the survey results were tallied there were two main calculations to analyze the effectiveness of the project. First, for each group of questions, the mean was calculated. This calculation showed whether or not the average result increased or decreased after the post-project survey was completed.

Second, a t-test was performed. The particular t-test performed was the “paired two sample for means” t-test. Once the t-test was calculated, the absolute value of the t
stat was compared against the t critical two-tailed value. If the absolute value of the t stat was larger than the t critical two-tailed value, then the p value was taken into consideration. If the p value was less than .05, then it was concluded that the intervention (the class on family worship) made a statistically significant difference.

**Evaluation of the Goals**

**Goal 1**

The first goal was to help the families grow in their understanding of family worship. In order for this goal to be considered successfully met, a positive statistical difference was required between the pre-project and post-project survey. Questions 10, 11, and 12 pertained to this goal. Question 10 asked the participants to respond to the following statement: “I have a clear understanding of how to lead family worship.” Question 11 asked the participants to respond to this statement: “I have a clear understanding of the benefits of family worship.” Question 12 asked the participants to respond to this statement: “I have a clear understanding of how to educate my children in biblical/spiritual matters.” In addition to the survey, the interviews and in-home observations needed to show an increase in understanding of family worship.

For these three questions, the combined mean response was 4.65 (falling between “somewhat agree” and “agree”) for the pre-project survey and 5.25 (between “agree” and “strongly agree”) for the post-project survey. Based on these two mean scores, it is clear that there was an increase in the understanding of family worship after the class.

The t-test also confirmed what was observed in the two mean scores. The same questions were tallied for each family and then paired with their responses at the end of the project. Based on the t-test results, there was a statistically significant difference in the participants’ understanding of family worship at the end of the project ($t_{(16)} = 4.98$, $p<.00014$).

This goal was also assessed through semi-structured post-project interviews.
with the participants during week 15 or one week after the project completed (see appendix 2). Even though none of the questions directly asked about their understanding of family worship, none could be satisfactorily answered if they did not have a good understanding of it.

Several themes came up in the interviews pertaining to the participants’ understanding of family worship. In question 2, “What difficulties did you have leading family worship?” many of the difficulties mentioned were at the beginning of the project and had to do with the parents not knowing how to effectively lead the children through the various elements of family worship. Other problems that came up had to do with managing unruly children, and knowing what type of Bible to use, what songs to sing, and how to get children to learn catechisms and Scripture verses. Some of the participants noted that after the class and weeks of practice, many of these difficulties decreased. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the participants grew in their knowledge of family worship.

The in-home observations were the last way of assessing if the first goal was met. There is always the risk during an in-home observation of influencing how the family may practice family worship. This risk was minimized by intentionally sitting away from the family circle and staying quiet during the family worship time. Watching the participants practice family worship in their own homes was an excellent way to assess their understanding of the discipline. Since each family is different, there were different needs and challenges to be overcome.

Seeing how the families progressed over the two months after class showed that they grew in their understanding of family worship. One example is how parents with children integrated a time of discipleship and biblical education into their family worship. The families had clearly learned from the class and incorporated an intentional time of discipleship that was tailored for each child. This was demonstrated by the parents having an age appropriate Bible verse and catechism for their children to memorize.
Considering how many of families were not even practicing family worship before the class, this shows a major improvement in their understanding of the discipline and application of that knowledge.

Based on the mean increase in scores between the surveys, the statistically significant difference in the t-test scores, the positive response in the post-project interviews, and the in-home observations, it can be concluded that the first goal was successfully met. The data, both quantitative and qualitative, shows a clear improvement in the participants’ understanding of family worship.

Goal 2

The second goal was to motivate families to practice family worship on a daily basis, with a minimum of five times per week. Like the first goal, this goal was assessed through the t-test data of the survey, a look at the overall mean scores of the data, the post-project interviews, and the in-home observations.

The pre-project and post-project survey had four questions that assessed the actions of the participants before and after the project. All four of these questions asked the participants to assess their actions over the past month. The questions pertained to one of the four elements of family worship described in the first four chapters. Question 6 asked, “How often does your family read Scripture (or a children’s Bible) together?” Question 7 asked, “Other than during meals, how often does your family pray together?” Question 8 asked, “How often does your family sing Scripture, worship songs, or hymns together at home?” Finally, question 9 asked, “How often do you or your spouse have formal times of biblical/spiritual education with your children?”

Before looking at the mean of all four questions together, it will be helpful to evaluate the separate responses for each question.
Table 1. Pre- and post-project survey responses for questions 6 through 9

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For question 6, “How often does your family read Scripture (or a children’s Bible) together?” the mean pre-project score was 2.06, which is equivalent to “1 time per week.” However, the post-project score for the same question was 3.29, which is equivalent to, “2-3 times per week.” Like question 6, questions 7 and 8 showed an improvement in the mean score with the post-project survey (see table 1). Oddly, question 9 actually showed a small drop in the post-project score. One possible reason why the score dropped was because the question was not understood. During much of the project, the topic of discipling children was discussed, but the term “biblical/spiritual education” was not used much. Therefore, it is possible the scores did not improve because the parents did not understand what was being asked.

Even with one of the questions not showing improvement in the mean score, the other three showed enough improvement to compensate. The mean score for all four questions for the pre-project survey was 2.29 (slightly above “1 time per week”). The mean score for all four questions for the post-project survey was 2.82, which is close to “2-3 times per week.”

The t-test confirms that there was a significant increase in the scores. Like goal 1, the questions were tallied for each participant and then paired with their responses at the end of the project. Based on the results, there was a statistically significant difference in the participants’ motivation to practice family worship at the end of the project \( (t_{(16)} = 3.067, p<.00737) \).

While these results did increase from 2.29 to 2.82, the mean scores show that the numbers did not increase enough to meet the goal of 4.5 (five times per week). There are several possible reasons why this did not occur. A common theme that came up
during the interviews was the difficulty of scheduling a time for family worship that worked with everyone’s schedule. Between parents getting home late from work, older children having sports commitments, children doing homework, and different children having different bedtimes, several parents noted how difficult it was to get everyone together for family worship.

However, was the challenge scheduling or was it actually motivation? Since most people determined their own schedule, whether by specifically choosing what they did or by making choices that in turn determined what they had to do, what a person did came down to their choices. So families that said they did not have time for family worship were actually saying that they chose to make other things more important. Therefore, one reason why this goal was not achieved was because the project did not motivate the families well enough to choose to make family worship a part of their daily lives.

Based on these results, the class did have an impact on the participants’ motivation to practice the four elements of family worship. There was an improvement in mean scores after the project. Additionally, the t-test showed a statistically significant difference. The interviews revealed that the parents were motivated to practice family worship, though the challenge of scheduling certainly made it difficult.

Even though the results show that the class increased the participants’ motivation, it was not enough to move them to practice family worship more often. Goal 2 stated that the aim was to motivate families to practice family worship “a minimum of at least five times per week.” While there was an increase in frequency and a positive statistical in the t-test scores of practicing family worship, it was not enough to meet the minimal “five times per week.” Therefore goal 2 was not successfully met.

See the section on “Suggested Changes for the Project” for an evaluation of the goal and how putting the goal should not have had the clause, “a minimum of at least five times per week.”
Goal 3

The third and final goal of the project was to encourage families to read Scripture, pray, sing, and have a time of biblical education during their family worship. The difference between goals 3 and 2 is the difference between beliefs and motivation. Whereas goal 2 focused on improving the participants’ motivations (what led them to action) in practicing family worship, this goal focused on improving the participants’ beliefs about the discipline. Like the other two goals, this goal was assessed through the t-test data of the survey, a look at the overall mean scores of the data, the post-project interviews, and the in-home observations.

Three questions in the pre-project and post-project survey assessed the participants before and after the project, each of which pertained to the participants’ beliefs about family worship. Question 13 in the survey asked families to respond to the following statement: “Family worship is essential to the spiritual health of my family and me.” Question 14 in the survey asked the families to respond to this statement: “It is the duty of parents to lead their children in family worship.” Question 15 in the survey asked families to respond to the following statement: “Family worship should usually include a time of reading Scripture, praying, singing and biblical education.”

After the three questions were combined and tallied, the mean score for the pre-survey questions was 5.45. The post-project survey results for the three questions was 5.47. Based on these results alone, there appears to be no change, however, this was only partially true.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question 13</th>
<th>Question 14</th>
<th>Question 15</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Pre-Project Response</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Post-Project Response</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>5.00</td>
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</table>
Looking at each question individually, question 13 showed a small mean improvement in the post-project survey. This is encouraging because it showed that the class did impact a small number of people to believe that family worship is essential to the spiritual health of the family. However, question 14 stayed exactly the same for both surveys, and question 15 actually dropped a small amount.

Similar to the mean scores, the t-test results showed that the project had very little impact on the participants’ beliefs about family worship. The absolute value of the t-stat (.187) was smaller than the critical value (2.12). Therefore, the teaching on family worship to the select group of participants did not make a statistically significant difference in the participants’ beliefs about reading Scripture, praying, singing, and having a time of biblical education (t (16) = .187, p < .85408).

What is interesting is that the post-project interviews showed that many of the participants had strong beliefs about the importance of family worship. While they did not practice the discipline as often as suggested, they held the belief that it was an important part of their family life. This came up multiple times during the interviews and is further shown through the high pre-project and post-project results for these three questions (5.45 and 5.47 are equivalent to “agree”). Additionally, the mere fact that the participants went through the hard work of attending the class and then practicing family worship several times a week for two months after the class shows that they at least believed it was important.

Knowing that the participants had strong beliefs about the importance of family worship will give the two churches that participated in the project a strong foundation to build upon. Not only will the pastoral staff be able to continue teaching about the topic, but they will also get the family members who participated in the project to be more involved in sharing about it to others in the church.

So why was there no positive statistical change in the survey results? The simplest and most likely answer to this question is that the post-survey results showed
very little change because the pre-survey results were already very high. It would be one thing if the results scored a 2.00 and then showed very little improvement. However, the pre-project average results were 5.45, leaving very little room for improvement. Obviously it would have been better to have such an effective class that the participants were motivated to score a 6.00 in the post-project survey, but this is not realistic. Nonetheless, scoring 5.47 in the post-project survey still shows that the vast majority of participants had strong beliefs about the importance of family worship.

**Evaluation of the Purpose**

The purpose of the project was to equip families at Grace Crossing Church, Louisville, Kentucky, to practice daily family worship. To achieve this purpose, three goals were developed. The first goal, to help the families grow in their understanding of family worship, was successfully met. There was a clear statistical difference between the two survey results and it was also clear from the post-project interviews and in-home observations that families grew in their understanding of family worship.

The second goal, to motivate families to practice family worship on a daily basis, showed a significant statistical change in the t-test scores but did not reach the minimal goal of five times per week. The third goal, to encourage families to utilize the following four basic elements within family worship: reading Scripture, praying, singing, and a time of discipleship, did not show a significant statistical change. Therefore goals 2 and 3 were not successfully met.

Since only one of the three goals of the project was achieved, it can be concluded that the overall purpose of the project was not successfully fulfilled. This is not to say that it was a complete failure. The project gave 17 families an in-depth look at family worship. Even though they did not end up practicing it as often as was sought in goal 2 (at least five times per week), or as extensively sought in goal 3, they were given a solid foundation about the discipline and will be in a good position to practice it more frequently in the future. Additionally, the in-home observations showed that each family
observed has the knowledge base needed to practice family worship in their home. So while not all of the goals were met, seeds were planted that will be able to grow in the future.

**Strengths of the Project**

While the project did not achieve everything it originally sought to do, there were still several strengths of this project. Based on the post-project interviews and in-home observations, four strengths will be mentioned.

The first strength of the project was that the four classes did a good job of educating families about family worship. The pre-project and post-project survey data also confirms that this was a strength of the project. While families did not necessarily practice family worship as often as was desired, they definitely grew in their knowledge about the discipline.

The second strength of the project was that parents were challenged to intentionally disciple their children. As mentioned in previous chapters, too often parents turn to the church to be the primary “disciplers” of their children. This project showed, from a biblical and historical perspective, that Christian parents are called to disciple their children.

Similarly, the third strength of the project was that it gave helpful resources to parents on discipling their children as well as reading Scripture, singing, and praying together. Throughout the course of the project, numerous books, catechisms, children’s Bibles, and other resources were recommended to the parents. While not everyone acquired every resource, it is clear from the post-project interviews and in-home observations that some of the families purchased and incorporated some of the recommended resources.

A final strength of the project was that the time and work put into developing the curriculum for the classes on family worship can be used again in the future. While there are certainly aspects of the curriculum that need to be rewritten, it is a useful curriculum ready to be taught to others outside of the project. In fact, immediately after
the classes on family worship finished for this project, the pastor at Landmark Independent Baptist Church asked to borrow parts of the curriculum to teach some of the missionaries from his church serving in Japan.

**Weaknesses of the Project**

Since this project did not achieve all three of the goals originally established, there were clearly some weaknesses, and some of these negatively impacted how the participants scored in the project. However, some of the other weaknesses had more to do with assessing the project and did not actually impact the participants.

The first weakness of the project was that it did not motivate the participants to practice family worship five times per week. In other words, the project did not show that it was more important than the other activities on their schedule. Since this was one of the primary goals of the project (goal 2), more should have been done to achieve this goal. It is clear that the participants learned a lot during the class, but their newfound knowledge did not motivate them to practice family worship on a daily basis. Several suggestions will be given in the next section on how to better achieve this goal.

The second weakness of the project was the lack of accountability during weeks 7 through 15. During this time, the participants had completed the classroom instruction and were told to practice family worship on a daily basis. I contacted each family on a weekly basis but it did not produce the desired results. While not practicing family worship cannot be blamed exclusively on a lack of accountability, this is one aspect that could be improved upon. Suggestions for how this could be improved upon are given in the next section.

The third weakness of this project was that the parents were not given enough opportunities to practice family worship in a supervised environment. The classes did an

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2While it is my belief that practicing family worship on a daily basis is best, see the section on “Suggested Changes for the Project” on how it would have been best to not put in the clause “a minimum of at least five times per week.”
excellent job of educating parents about family worship, but did a poor job of giving parents the opportunity to practice it before going home. If the parents were confident after the classroom phase of the project, then perhaps they would have practiced it more frequently during the following two months.

The fourth weakness of the project was the overall teaching method used. After reviewing the feedback of the participants, it is likely that the classroom environment was not the best environment for teaching family worship. Family worship is not something that is simply taught, but also experienced. Teaching in a classroom setting did a good job passing along information, which is why the participants scored highly in the information goal (goal 1), however, since the purpose of the project was also to get them to practice family worship, there were likely better environments in which to train the families, which is explored in the next section.

Finally, the fifth weakness of the project was the method of assessing the goals. While the pre-project and post-project survey was a straightforward way of assessing changes in behavior or beliefs, it was perhaps too simple to completely assess the three goals. Some other methods of assessment that focused on each individual goal would have been more effective in assessing the success (or failure) of them.

Suggested Changes for the Project

Many of the suggested changes have to do with the areas of weakness given in the previous section. The first suggested change is to focus more attention on motivating the participants to practice family worship instead of simply learning about it. There is no easy solution to lack of motivation, but several suggestions will be given.

First, in addition to a class (or smaller group setting, as is mentioned briefly) on family worship, it might be helpful to have several other methods of conveying the importance of family worship. This might include a sermon series, a night of prayer for families, and other unique events focused on families and family worship. The more the discipline can be promoted during that time, the better. Second, it would be helpful to
teach the children about family worship at the same time. If the children get excited about worshipping God at home, then they will be a major motivating factor for the parents. Third, it would be helpful to have multiple leaders talk about family worship. It is one thing to hear one leader talk about the discipline, but it is another to hear multiple leaders emphasize its importance.

The second area of change is how the information is conveyed. This project would have been more effective if it were taught in a smaller group setting than in a classroom setting. Having a small group class on family worship that meets in a home would be a better environment.

Additionally, the parents should be given opportunities to practice family worship while with the leader. If this were done in a home-based small group, the leader could teach on family worship while the children are in another room. At the end of the teaching time, the children could come back to the parents, and groups of families could divide and practice leading family worship. This would offer the parents more practice and confidence in leading family worship at their own home.

A third area of change is the wording of the goals. Two changes should be made to the goals. First, the wording of goal 2 made it very difficult to be successfully met. Even though there was a significant statistical change, the scores did not meet the “five days per week” requirement. It would be best to remove the requirement for “five days per week” and focus the goal on a significant statistical change.

Second, it would be best to reword the goals to incorporate the possibility of high pre-project survey results. For example, it would be helpful if there was a clause after each goal that states if the pre-project survey results was above a certain score then that particular goal would be considered already successfully met.

A fourth area where changes should be made is how the project is assessed. It would be best to do different types of assessments for each goal instead of one survey that covers all three goals. For example, a brief pre-project and post-project quiz would
better assess the participants’ knowledge of family worship (goal 1) instead of simply
surveying whether the person believes they have grown in their knowledge of the
discipline. Goal 2 would be better assessed through a “take-home” log that the
participants fill out each day and then send in each week. This would be helpful in
accurately assessing the participants’ frequency of practicing family worship and also
given an earlier warning about people who were missing family worship too often.

Finally, a fifth area of change is in regard to the follow up between week 6
(after the class finished) and the end of the project. I checked in with the participants on a
weekly basis but that did not seem to be enough. It would have been better to work out a
way to follow up in person. One way this could have been done would be to spread out
the classes. For example, instead of having the classes all at the beginning it might have
worked better if there was a class, then two weeks for them to practice on their own, then
another class. This “in person” time might have made follow up more effective and
allowed the participants more accountability in their family worship.

Theological Reflections
After spending almost two years writing this project there has been ample time
to reflect upon what I have learned about God and his Word. Three main themes come to
mind. The first theme is the importance of worshipping God.

From Genesis to Revelation, it is clear that God wants his people to worship
him. Christians are called to worship God not only through song, but also with their
entire lives. As Paul says, we are to “present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and
acceptable to God, which is [our] spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1). Worship is not something
that people do once a day but continually. It is not simply an act Christians do but a
lifestyle Christians live.

Worship is at the heart of family worship. Family worship is not about being
able to check off another box of spiritual things to do for the day. Nor is it simply done
for the sake of raising godly children or bringing unity to the family. No, family worship
is about gathering together to worship God as a family. If there is no heart of worship during family worship, then the discipline is nothing but a family gathering.

A second theme I learned during this project is that God calls parents to teach their children. Far too often I see Christian parents relying on the church or youth group to convert and disciple their children. This is not how God intended it to be.

God calls parents to be the primary ones to disciple their children. This expectation was clear in the Old Testament but also continued into the New Testament. Parents who do not disciple their children to love God (Deut. 6:5-7) are not only disobeying God but also miss out on helping their children learn to worship.

Finally, a third theme I discovered during this project is about the importance of being grounded in the Word. Figuring out how to love God and worship him can be a daunting task if it is done without the guidance of the Bible. The Bible shows people how to love, obey, and grow closer to God, which is why it is so important to make Scripture the foundational element of family worship.

When a family gathers together to worship God, the Bible must be directly or indirectly involved in every element of worship. When the family sings, they should sing scripturally-sound lyrics. When prayers are prayed, Scripture should guide those as well. When parents disciple their children, they should do so with Scripture in mind. Scripture is the anchor that helps families stay close to God.

**Personal Reflections**

The survey and interview results show the project had a mild to moderate impact on the lives of the parents who participated. What would have shown even better results would have been assessing the life of the pastor who spent so much effort on developing and leading this project. I can honestly say that I grew in so many ways over the course of this project.

This project encouraged my family and me to grow spiritually. After spending so much time studying what God said about worship and the family, I was compelled to
live it out in my own life. So while the project sought to impact the lives of the families in the church, the real change happened in my own life as I learned what God said and then decided to obey. I wanted to be a father that could genuinely say, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh 24:15).

Applying this project in my own life helped me as I taught others to do the same. Many of the suggestions I gave during the class on how to lead family worship came out of my own experience while leading my family. Just like many families, we struggled with knowing what children’s Bible to read, what songs to sing, how to best disciple our young children, and how to make time for it.

However, more than just family worship, I was also challenged to set an example in my family by growing spiritually. It is difficult to lead your family in worship if you are struggling spiritually. Since I wanted my family to grow spiritually, I learned that I needed to be diligent in my own life as well.

Something else I learned through this process was the importance of not giving up. Multiple times during the past couple of years it would have been easy to withdraw from the program. I changed ministry positions, moved to another state, and battled with the typical discouragement of completing such a daunting project. Should this paper be approved and I finish the last few steps of this degree, it will not be because I am some great writer or student, but because God helped me press on and not give up.

I was able to use this same attitude with my church as well. The congregation I worked with during this project had numerous challenges. Many of the people struggled with addictions. The church and leaders had problems as well. In the middle of my project the senior pastor resigned. Though, as I learned in the project, encountering a difficulty does not mean one should give up. With God’s help, the people of Grace Crossing Church can overcome addiction and other hardships if they let God help them and do not give up.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this project was to equip families at Grace Crossing Church,
Louisville, Kentucky, to practice daily family worship. Based on the results of this project, not all of the goals were met. However, even though the project did not accomplish every goal, it laid a solid foundation upon which others can build upon in the future.

The families that participated in this project now know about the importance of family worship. What they do with that knowledge is up to them. I have two prayers for them. My first prayer is that they live out what Joshua said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh 24:15). Similarly, I also pray that they will desire the same thing that Asaph wrote about thousands of years ago: “We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done” (Ps 78:4). May we always remember the wonders that God has done and tell them to our children.
APPENDIX 1

PRE-PROJECT AND POST-PROJECT SURVEY

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your practice regarding family worship. This research is being conducted by Kyle Lewis for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer the questions prior to the training on family worship and then again fifteen weeks later. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Demographics Information:

1. Please write your name or choose an identifying number:* ___________________
   *(This number will be used to match your survey when you complete it a second time at the end of the project. You may use the last four digits of your social security or any other numeric combination that you will remember).

2. Your living status:
   Married (Living With Spouse)    Single or Not Living With Spouse

3. Are you a Christian? (Which means, according to Romans 10:9: you have confessed that Jesus is the Lord of your life and you believe that he has power over death)
   Yes   No

4. Is your spouse a Christian? (If applicable, using the same definition as question 3)
   Yes   No   Not Applicable

5. What is the age of each child living at home?
   ___________________________________________________

Circle the response that most appropriately defines your practices over the past month:

6. How often does your family read Scripture (or a children’s Bible) together?
   0 times  1 time  2-3 times  4-5 times  6-7 times
   per week  per week  per week  per week  per week

7. Other than during meals, how often does your family pray together?
   0 times  1 time  2-3 times  4-5 times  6-7 times
   per week  per week  per week  per week  per week
8. How often does your family sing Scripture, worship songs, or hymns together at home?

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<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>0 times per week</th>
<th>1 time per week</th>
<th>2-3 times per week</th>
<th>4-5 times per week</th>
<th>6-7 times per week</th>
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9. How often do you or your spouse have formal times of biblical/spiritual education with your children?

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<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>0 times per week</th>
<th>1 time per week</th>
<th>2-3 times per week</th>
<th>4-5 times per week</th>
<th>6-7 times per week</th>
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**Circle the response that most appropriately defines your beliefs/understanding of family worship:**

10. I have a clear understanding of how to lead family worship.

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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11. I have a clear understanding of the benefits of family worship.

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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12. I have a clear understanding on how to educate my children in biblical/spiritual matters.

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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13. Family worship is essential to the spiritual health of my family and me.

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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14. It is the duty of parents to lead their children in family worship.

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
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15. Family worship should usually include a time of reading Scripture, praying, singing and biblical education.

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
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APPENDIX 2
POST-PROJECT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your experience leading family worship over the last twelve weeks.

2. What difficulties did you have leading family worship?
   a. If you overcame these difficulties, how did you do so?
   b. If you did not overcome these difficulties, what do you think are some of the reasons you were not able to do so?

3. Tell me about your most memorable moments during the past twelve weeks as you led family worship.

4. How did your children respond to the following elements of family worship?
   a. Reading Scripture
   b. Praying
   c. Singing
   d. Biblical/spiritual education

5. What part of this training best equipped you to lead in family worship?

6. What recommendations do you have to improve the training on family worship?
APPENDIX 3
OUTLINE FOR IN-HOME OBSERVATION
OF FAMILY WORSHIP

○ The family gathered together for a time of family worship. YES NO OTHER:

○ The entire family was present. YES NO OTHER:

○ Each family member seemed happy to gather together. YES NO OTHER:

○ The family had a time of reading Scripture. YES NO OTHER:

○ The family had a time of singing. YES NO OTHER:

○ The family had a time of praying. YES NO OTHER:

○ The family had a time of biblical education. YES NO OTHER:

○ Each member seemed engaged. YES NO OTHER:
APPENDIX 4

FAMILY WORSHIP CHART

**Weekly Family Worship Schedule**
March 2, 2014

**Parent’s Reading:** Acts

**Children’s Bible:** *Big Picture Story Bible*

**Verse (Julia):** Matthew 22:37

Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

**Verses (Josiah):** John 1:29

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!”

**Verse (Mama/Dada):** Romans 8:15

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

**Question (Julia):**

1. Who made you?
   
   *God made me.*

**Questions (Josiah):**

14. Where do you learn how to love and obey God?
   
   *In the Bible alone.*

15. Who wrote the Bible?
   
   *Holy men who were taught by the Holy Spirit.*

16. Who were our first parents?
   
   *Adam and Eve.*

**Theme of the Week:**

The Bible is... **necessary.**

- “The Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God’s character and moral laws.”

*Previous:*

- Authoritative
- Inerrant
- Clear

107
Song/Hymn of the Week:

I hear the Savior say,
"Thy strength indeed is small;
Child of weakness, watch and pray,
Find in Me thine all in all."

_Jesus paid it all,_
_All to Him I owe;_
_Sin had left a crimson stain,_
_He washed it white as snow._

Lord, now indeed I find
Thy power and Thine alone,
Can change the leper's spots
And melt the heart of stone.

And when before the throne
I stand in Him complete,
I'll lay my trophies down
All down at Jesus' feet.
APPENDIX 5
OVERVIEW OF TEACHING MATERIAL FOR
FAMILY WORSHIP CLASS

Family Worship Week 1 – The Basics

What is family worship?
Our working definition will be: “an intentional time in which the household family gathers together to worship God.”
  • Historically, this has included: Scripture, singing, prayer, and discipling children.

What does family worship look like in real life?

I propose these four major elements of family worship: Scripture, singing, prayer, and discipleship.

  • Read Scripture together
    o Since we have young children, we read a children’s Bible together. We usually read one story (or about five minutes worth or reading).
      ▪ If you have older or no children, you can read one chapter or section of Scripture.
    o We then identify the main point or important verses of the passage.
    o Always be on the lookout for the bigger picture (where Jesus is in the story).
    o Unless your conscience does not permit, consider using different children’s Bibles and or versions of the Bibles.
    o Resources: *The Big Picture Story Bible* by David Helm (favorite children’s Bible for ages 3-7 that does a great job looking at the “big picture”); *The Jesus Storybook* by Sally Lloyd-Jones (for older kids); The Bible (tweens/teens)

  • Sing a Bible verse (or other worship song)
    o We alternate between singing Scripture and other doctrinally sound songs.
    o If you sing Scripture, you can make up your own music or copy a tune from another song (Amazing Grace and other of Newton’s songs were originally written without music and then sung to popular tunes of the day)
    o No instruments are needed! The Lewis family rocks it acapella style.
    o For young kids, add motions/movement to some songs

  • Pray
    o Pray the main point/theme of the passage you read from the Bible.
    o Pray other important needs as well.
    o Get others involved in the prayers.
Discipleship (*more on this one later*)

**Notes**
- Typically, our entire worship time lasts less than fifteen minutes.
- We never prepare anything in advance.
- Aim to do it every day. If you miss a day just start again the next day.
- Aim to do it around the same time every day.
- We meet in the same place every night, though changing it up from time to time is helpful.
- Aim to involve everyone! Anyone who can read should take part in reading the Bible.
- Don’t expect any particular night to be spectacular. Family worship has its impact over time.

**Benefits:**
- Family time together
- Time in Scripture every day
- Children learn Scripture
- It promotes wonderful spiritual conversations
- Meeting daily engrains in your child’s mind that the Bible and God are important in your family.

**Common Questions:**
- What if I have children of multiple ages?
  - This will depend on the age of the children. Perhaps you will need to use different Bible each day (odd days use the “bigger” Bible and even days use the “kids” Bible). Involve the big kids in the reading. Whatever you read, ask the bigger kids “bigger” questions about the main point of the passage.
- What if I don’t have children?
  - Family worship just got a lot easier! Follow the same pattern but use a regular Bible and go through entire books, one chapter at a time.
- What can I do to get something out of this as an adult?
  - Even if you only have a “family worship” with the kids, you will benefit from learning Scripture, teaching your children, and praying on a daily basis. If you want more, then consider meeting together a second time once the kids are in bed.
- How often should I do it?
  - Aim to meet every day.

**HOMEWORK -** Meet each day and have a time of reading Scripture, singing, and praying.
Family Worship Week 2 – Scriptural Foundation

Scriptural foundation for family worship

Even though there is not an explicit command in Scripture for families to practice worship together, it is implicitly implied throughout.

- We are commanded to love God: Deut. 6:4-6 (In NT: Luke 4:27)
- We are called to give God glory: Isaiah 43:7, 21; 1 Peter 2:9
- God desires to be worshipped: John 4:23-24
- *Other passages that command us to worship: Hebrews 12:28, 13:15; Isaiah 12:5, 56:7; Psalm 29:2, 84:10; Rev. 19:10, 15:4; 1 Peter 2:5.*
- **Scripture makes it clear that Christians are to worship God. Family worship is one way in which we can worship God.**

- We are also told to listen to and obey the Word (**Scripture**): Colossians 3:16a, Psalm 1, Psalm 119:7-8
- We are told to sing: Psalm 95:1-3, Ephesians 5:18-20 (See also: Psalm 100:1-2; Col. 3:16, James 5:13)
- We are told to pray: 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Ephesians 6:18 (See also: Philippians 4:6, James 5:13)
- **Worshipping God involves (among other things) singing, praying, and meditating on Scripture.**

Scripture makes it clear that Christians are to worship God. Family worship is one way in which we can worship God. Worshipping God involves (among other things) listening to and obeying Scripture, singing, and praying. Scripture also makes it clear that parents are to train their children in godliness. Since we are gathering as a family, it is also a perfect time to do this.

With older or no kids:

- Kick back and relax!
- Read Scripture together
  - Go through a book of the Bible systematically (though on occasion, it might be beneficial to study thematically)
  - Consider reading the same chapter for multiple days (we spent 3 months going through Acts)
  - Pick out verses that stick out to you
  - Discuss the verses
- Sing Scripture, hymns, or other doctrinally sound songs
- Pray
  - Intentionally pray verses/themes that you highlighted. Considering praying two each. For example, you highlighted verses 1, 7, and 9 and your spouse highlighted 3, 7, and 14. You can open and pray a prayer related to v. 7, then your spouse prays something related to v. 3, then you pray something related to v. 9, then your spouse prays something related to v. 14 and then closes.
- Add in elements of discipleship (such as Scripture memorization)
A Quick Explanation on Praying Scripture:

What is Praying Scripture?

When you pray, let Scripture guide your prayers.

How To Pray Through Scripture:

-Simply go through the passage, line-by-line, praying what you find in the text or what it brings to mind.

-Let the words of Scripture guide the words of your prayers.

-EXAMPLES:
  - Praying the verse “literally” – Psalm 19:14
  - Letting Scripture “lead” you – 1 Thes. 5:18
  - Praying the verse “thematically” – John 1:4
  - Praying what comes to mind – John 1:19

-What are the benefits of praying through Scripture?
  - Gives us great **material** to pray
  - Directs our prayers in a more godly and biblical manner
  - Connects us to more **power** (Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16)
  - Helps us learn Scripture (**meditation**)

**Benefits of family worship:**

- Worshipping God
- Family time together
- Time in Scripture every day
- Children learn Scripture
- It promotes wonderful spiritual conversations
- Meeting daily engrains in your child’s mind that the Bible and God are important in your family.

HOMEWORK - Meet each day and have a time of reading Scripture, singing, and praying.
Family Worship Week 3 – Discipleship

The Fourth Element of Family Worship: Discipleship

Spurgeon said… “I trust there are none here present, who profess to be followers of Christ who do not also practice prayer in their families. We may have no positive commandment for it, but we believe that it is so much in accord with the genius and spirit of the gospel, and that it is so commanded by the example of the saints, that the neglect thereof is a strange inconsistency.”

“Brethren, I wish it were more common, I wish it were universal, with all [Christians] to have family prayer. We sometimes hear of children of Christian parents who do not grow up in the fear of God, and we are asked how it is that they turn out so badly. In many, very many cases, I fear there is such a neglect of family worship that it’s not probable that the children are at all impressed by any piety supposed to be possessed by their parents.”

All throughout Scripture there was an expectation for parents to disciple their children:

- It was expected in the Old Testament: Deut. 6:5-9; Psalm 78:1-8 (see also: Gen. 18:17-19; Joshua 24:15)
- It is still expected: Ephesians 6:4
  - Notice that the fathers (or parents) are responsible for the spiritual instruction of their children, NOT the church
  - (see also: 1 Tim. 3:4-5 regarding elders; 2 Tim. 3:14-15)

How to disciple your children during family worship

- Live out the gospel in your lives 24/7, not just during church or family worship (your kids will see your hypocrisy)
- Remember that simply meeting together to worship God on a regular basis will have an impact
- Be intentional about the songs you sing (Scripture or other spiritually edifying songs)
- Implement a system of catechizing your children (and your spouse)
  - “Instruct (someone) in the principles of Christian religion by means of question and answer”
- Implement a system of Scripture memorization for your children (and your spouse)
- Have a chart with the following information:
  - Scripture verses currently memorizing
  - Catechism questions currently working on
  - Any other relevant teaching/discipleship material (we go through a different systematic theology theme bi-weekly)
  - Song/Hymn of the week

-Resources –
  - Truth and Grace Memory Book
    - Book 1: Age 2 to 4th Grade; Book 2: Grades 5 to 8; Book 3: Grades 9 to 12.

HOMEWORK: Continue meeting each day and add a time of discipling each other through appropriate means (catechizing, memorization, etc...)
Family Worship Week 4 – Family Worship In History

Account of the early church:

“But it was not merely at noon, and in time of their meals, that the primitive Christians read the word of God, and sang praises to his name. At an early hour in the morning the family assembled, when a portion of Scripture was read from the Old Testament, which was followed by a hymn and a prayer, in which thanks were offered up to the Almighty for preserving them during the silent watches of the night, and for his goodness in permitting them to meet in healthy of body and soundness of mind; and at the same time, his grace was implored to defend them amid the dangers and the temptations of the day — to make them faithful to every duty, and enable them, in all respects, to walk worthy of their Christian vocation. . . . In the evening, before retiring to rest, the family again assembled, when the same form of worship was observed as in the morning, with this difference, that the service was considerably protracted beyond the period which could be conveniently allotted to it in the commencement of the day. Besides all these observances, they were in the habit of rising at midnight, to engage in prayer and singing of psalms . . .” From The Antiquities of the Christian Church

I. Tertullian (160-220 A.D.)

II. … They pray together, fast together, instruct, exhort, and support each other. They go together to the church of God, and to the table of the Lord. They share each other’s tribulation, persecution, and revival…. Psalms and hymns they sing together, and they vie with each other in singing to God. Christ rejoices when he sees and hears this. He gives them his peace. Where two are together in his name, there is he; and where he is, there the evil one cannot come. [italics added]

Augustine (354-430 A.D.)

“It is your duty to put your talent to usury; every one must be bishop in his own house; he must see that his wife, his son, his daughter, his servant, since he is bought with so great a price, continues in the true faith.”

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Abraham [who] had in his tent a house of God and a church, just as today any godly and pious head of a household instructs his children… in godliness. Therefore such a house is actually a school and church, and the head of the household is a bishop and priest in his house.

Westminster Confession of Faith and the Second London Confession of 1689

“God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth; as in private families daily, and in secret each one by himself.”

Matthew Henry (1662-1714):

“If therefore our houses be houses of the Lord, we shall for that reason love home, reckoning our daily devotion the sweetest of our daily delights; and our family-worship the most valuable of our family-comforts…. A church in the house will be a good legacy, nay, it will be a good inheritance, to be left to your children after you.”

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“[Edwards] began the day with private prayers followed by family prayers, by candlelight in the winter…. Care for his children’s souls was, of course, his preeminent concern. In morning devotions he quizzed them on Scripture with questions appropriate to their ages… Each meal was accompanied by household devotions, and at the end of each day Sarah joined him in his study for prayers.”
George Marsden

Samuel Davies (1724-1761)
“If you love your children, if you would bring down the blessing of heaven upon your families: if you would have your children make their houses the receptacles of religion when they set up in life for themselves; if you would have religion survive in this place, and be conveyed from age to age; if you would deliver your own souls – I beseech, I entreat, I charge you to begin and continue the worship of God in your families from this day to the close of your lives... Consider family religion not merely as a duty imposed by authority, but as your greatest privilege granted by divine grace.”

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) –
“If we want to bring up a godly family, who shall be a seed to serve God when our heads are under the clods of the valley, let us seek to train them up in the fear of God by meeting together as a family for worship.”

His wife wrote this: “... after the meal was over, an adjournment was made to the study for family worship, and it was at these seasons that my beloved's prayers were remarkable for their tender childlikeness, their spiritual pathos, and their intense devotion. He seemed to come as near to God as a little child to a loving father, and we were often moved to tears as he talked thus face to face with his Lord.”

MOTIVATIONS: Three main reasons why Christians practiced family worship...

1) To Worship God

2) To Grow Spiritually

3) To Disciple Children

Terry L. Johnson writes:
“If your children are in your home for eighteen years, you have 6,570 occasions (figuring a six day week) for family worship. If you learn a new Psalm or hymn each month, they will be exposed to 216 in those eighteen years. If you read a chapter a day, you will complete the Bible four and a half times in eighteen years. Every day they will affirm a creed or recite the law. Every day they will confess their sins and plead for mercy. Every day they will intercede on behalf of others. Think in terms of the long view. What is the cumulative impact of just fifteen minutes of this each day, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, for eighteen years? At the rate of six days a week (excluding Sunday), one spends an hour and a half a week in family worship (about the length of a home Bible study), seventy-eight hours a year (about the length of two weekend retreats), and 1,404 hours over the course of eighteen years (about the length of eight week-long summer camps). When you establish your priorities, think in terms of the cumulative effect of this upon your children. Think of the cumulative effect of this upon you, after forty or sixty or eighty years of daily family worship. All this, without having to drive anywhere.”

Thomas Manton (1620-1677):
-“A family is the seminary of church and state and if children be not well principled there, all miscarrieth.”
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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING FAMILIES AT GRACE CROSSING CHURCH,
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, TO PRACTICE
DAILY FAMILY WORSHIP

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This project sought to develop the spiritual discipline of family worship at Grace Crossing Church, Louisville, Kentucky. Chapter 1 introduces Grace Crossing Church, Louisville, Kentucky, and gives a broad overview of the project. There were three goals for this project: help the families grow in their understanding of family worship, motivate families to practice family worship on a daily basis, with a minimum of at least five times per week, and encourage families to read Scripture, pray, sing, and have a time of biblical education. Chapter 2 gives biblical and theological support for family worship. Chapter 3 evaluates the historical and practical issues related to family worship. Chapter 4 gives a detailed description of how the project was carried out. Finally, Chapter 5 evaluates both the project and the results of the project.
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