TRAINING THE PARENTS OF SHADY OAKS BAPTIST
CHURCH, HURST, TEXAS, TO LEAD
FAMILY WORSHIP

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Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Doctor of Educational Ministry

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by
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May 2018
APPROVAL SHEET

TRAINING THE PARENTS OF SHADY OAKS BAPTIST CHURCH, HURST, TEXAS, TO LEAD FAMILY WORSHIP

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I dedicate this project to my wife, Shawna, and our two children, Lydia and Noah, whose joyful participation in family worship encourages all my efforts.
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PREFACE

I thank my Savior, King Jesus, for the opportunity to serve Him. His Spirit guided my heart to and through this work. I pray that this effort has been received as the worship I intended to bring.

I thank my wife, Shawna, for her support and encouragement throughout this project. Even more so, I thank her for her support of family worship in our home. Shawna, I have no greater joy in this life than worshipping beside you. This work has been motivated by the desire for other families to share in the joy we experience. Lydia, Noah, Poppy, Micah, and Judah, I want nothing more than for you to know the love of Jesus Christ. Thank you for worshipping with me. To my parents, I greatly appreciate your prayers, support, and love through the years. I know and love Jesus because of your guidance.

I thank this institution, Southern Seminary, for its investment in me and my church. I especially thank Dr. Danny Bowen, my supervisor, for his commitment to ministry excellence as an act of worship. Your encouragement was invaluable to my time in seminary. I would also like to thank Dr. Gary Gramling for his friendship and ministry through my time at Howard Payne University until now. Your Christ-like encouragement is a principal reason I am still committed to ministry. I want to thank Dr. Richard Ross for his influence from afar in my call to Christian ministry and commitment to family ministry.

Finally, I thank my church, Shady Oaks Baptist Church, for their ministry to me since birth. I am indebted to the countless men and women who have ministered to
me through my life in such a way that no effort could ever pay it back. I never imagined
that I would serve in my home church. I pray that we strive together to worship our
Creator, corporately and in our homes.

Michael Sawyer

Hurst, Texas

May 2018
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The mission of Shady Oaks Baptist Church is to glorify God by making disciples one family at a time. Family worship is a fundamental practice for families who seek to glorify God in all that they do and for parents who desire their children grow in the ways of the Lord. However, this essential is often relegated to the periphery within many Christian homes. For some families, the practice’s absence is due to a lack of conviction regarding its importance. Others struggle to find a manageable approach. Rather than consign the families at Shady Oaks Baptist Church to homes devoid of family worship, I intended to address the issue of family worship within this context. Family worship was established as the keystone habit upon which all other family discipleship is built. This project utilized a multifaceted approach to achieve its end; however, pastoral visitation was a main component to ensure the efficacy of implementation. Every family is unique and individualized attention was necessary for adequate training and encouragement.

Context

This ministry project took place within Shady Oaks Baptist Church (SOBC) in the Dallas–Fort Worth (DFW) suburb of Hurst, Texas. SOBC is sixty years old and is comprised of primarily middle-class families.¹ Approximately 50 percent of the church members have been members for ten or more years. Additionally, about 50 percent of the adults in the congregation are senior adults, though there is not necessarily a correlation between length of time in the church and the age of the member. These two factors

¹Despite the age of the church there are still three original members of the church.
combine to create a unique attribute in the congregation. At SOBC, it is common for three generations of a family to be represented on any given Sunday. Several parents have raised their children in this church and now have the opportunity to see their grandchildren growing up in the same place.

Most families of the church joined during the tenure of John Bobo, who was the senior pastor from 1974 to 2004. The effects of his thirty-year tenure are still felt throughout every area of the church. All of the church’s major construction projects, creation of staff positions, decisions on ministry programming, and the like can be traced to his leadership window. The longevity of his ministry is most likely the primary factor that has produced the prevalence of three-generation families who attend regularly.

Over the past seven years, average attendance has dropped from right at 500 people on Sunday to an average of 420. A few factors explain much of the decline. At the beginning of 2015, the church experienced a slight decrease when combining the two worship services, one traditional and one contemporary, to a blended service. The primary reason for combining services was to promote unity within the church. While the service times had an influence, the bulk of the decline can be attributed to the impact of an aging congregation combined with the failure to reach new families at a comparable pace.

The failure to reach families in the community has been discussed alongside the failure to disciple the families that are present. As an attempt to remedy these issues, SOBC adopted a new mission statement at the beginning of 2014, which reads, “Our mission is to glorify God by making disciples one family at a time.” The senior pastor led the charge on making this change to focus on family discipleship. Following a time of personal reading and reflection, the pastor revealed this new statement at a staff retreat. The decision to make a change was made in isolation. As a result, few tangible improvements have been made.

Most estimates from long-time church members and staff place the number at around 75 percent of the congregation.
have been made to accompany the change as the staff, including the pastor, mentally catch up to the implications of the new focus.

While the decision for a change was made by one person it did not appear, initially, to create any discord. This is primarily because the change was in word and not in deed. The church values the family as seen in the multiplicity of generations present every week. Additionally, amongst church leadership there is a strong desire to focus on the family as a primary means for disciple-making. However, there are substantial barriers to seeing this desire bear fruit. There was little evidence that families are being any more intentional in making disciples within their homes than they were prior to the introduction of the new statement. Things seem to have continued as normal as indicated by the following trends which predate the change in mission statement.

First, there is a noticeable generational divide at Shady Oaks. During the Sunday morning worship hour, preschoolers are placed in extended care while kindergarteners through fifth graders attend a children’s worship service. Students in sixth grade through twelfth grade primarily sit in the student section of the sanctuary and adults sit childless in their pew. In an attempt to bring families together, a family worship service occurs the last Sunday of every month. At this time, the children’s worship service is cancelled and children sit with their families during the worship hour. Based on the model, if families attended worship every week from the time a child is born until they leave for college, they would only sit together in worship a total of seventy-two times. Common sense says they will not be perfect attendees, meaning it is safe to assume that most families would worship together less than fifty times in their lives if they lived their entire life within the congregation.

An awareness of the generational divide is heightened when families are observed on the church campus. Parents exhibit little desire to interact with their children in a meaningful way during church events that are spiritual in nature. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that this disconnect, at least in part, translates into the home. Spiritual
resources that are provided for families remain largely unused. There are rarely requests for ministerial input in the spiritual development of children from their parents. Finally, most children cannot articulate a regular time where their parents discuss spiritual issues with them.

Additionally, discipleship strategies that focus on individual families are absent from SOBC. The mission statement of SOBC specifically places emphasis on individual family units. However, this written emphasis is not borne out in practice despite a leadership structure that should enable this very thing. There are five full-time ministers and thirty-two deacons in the church. The church itself averages around four hundred attendees each week. Despite this impressive ratio, individualized ministry to persons and family units is typically limited to crisis intervention, such as hospital visits, funerals, and counseling. Furthermore, the deacon ministry for church congregants focuses mainly on widow care. Widows need a caring pastoral presence, however, “making disciples one family at a time” would imply a greater emphasis on discipling the family unit as a whole. Discipleship that focuses on groups of at least eight or more, such as Sunday school or mid-week Bible studies, receives most of the emphasis from ministers. This emphasis on groups has created a culture where “one-size-fits-all” approaches leave many individuals behind. Especially neglected in this model are individual families and their specific needs.

The essential practice of family worship is a foreign concept within the culture of SOBC. For most families, this idea is new and undeveloped. While parents are equipped with occasional resources promoting family worship, a consistent practice of family worship is lacking. Also, many church leaders neglect this practice, which leaves the congregation without clear models for family worship. Lack of worship together at church and the absence of family worship in the home leads to a failure of families worshipping together at any time.
**Rationale**

SOBC desires to bring glory to God through worship. This aspiration should not be limited, however, to the Sunday morning “worship hour.” It should translate into everyday life. Family worship provides a daily opportunity for families to worship their Creator together. Additionally, Christ’s commission in Matthew 28 to make disciples places the responsibility on all believers to do just that; make disciples. Family worship is a practical and effective way for parents to make disciples within the home. It reinforces the family’s call to worship their creator and for parents to be spiritual leaders to their children.

In an increasingly secular society, discussion of spiritual things is becoming less common. As such, instruction from parents to children on spiritual matters feels foreign and forced. Daily family worship serves to make “spiritual talk” feel natural within the family unit. Ideally, spiritual conversations would not only be comfortable, but with the presence of family worship, they would be common. This familiarity would aid spiritual growth and intentional discipleship efforts outside of the context of family worship.

To train parents to lead family worship, this project relied heavily on pastoral visitation. There are multiple reasons why this was a primary means of instruction. First, family worship is a foreign practice to most families at SOBC. Therefore, personalized instruction was required to help parents grow in confidence, knowledge, and motivation with respect to leading family worship. Furthermore, allotting time for one-on-one instruction allowed for discussion and clarity in areas of confusion. Second, SOBC is primarily comprised of families that learn best by watching and doing as opposed to lecture and reading. To fully communicate the details of what family worship is and could be, these families needed to see it done. Visitation allowed them this opportunity. Finally, visitation allowed the minister on staff to be faithful to his calling to shepherd the flock “one family at a time.” No other component of ministry at SOBC emphasizes the family unit the way personalized visitation does.
Family worship should be treated as a keystone habit for families. Family worship had to become habitual and natural within the daily routine of each family. To create this habit, the nature of forming healthy habits had to be explored and leveraged in the strategy for this project. Establishing this practice as a keystone habit within the families of the congregation required the practice to be extant in the lives of church leaders so that a consistent example would be given. Other activities or disciplines such as family service projects, family dinner, and attendance at corporate worship as a family were considered. Family worship was chosen as it provided a consistent presence of spiritual emphasis in the home from which other practices can be launched.

**Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

*Family worship.* Jason Helopoulos explains, “Family worship is that sphere of worship which incorporates those living under the same roof in a time of worship together.” In the context of this project, three main practices comprised the means of family worship: Scripture reading accompanied with familial dialogue, prayer, and musical worship. These three activities were selected per the recommendation of several authors as well as discussion amongst the leadership team of SOBC. Direction for each of these activities was provided in the Family Worship Guide.

*Family.* In the context of this project, family was defined as a group of individuals consisting of legal guardians and children living in the same household. Children’s ages may range from birth to eighteen. At SOBC, it is common for children to

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4The works of Joel Beeke, Jason Helopoulos, and Donald Whitney were highly influential in the development of this project. These three practices are expounded on in chap. 3. Joel R. Beeke, *Family Worship*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2009); Helopoulos, *A Neglected Grace*; Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

5See appendix 8.
live with guardians other than both biological parents. As such, guardians may be parents but could be grandparents or other family members. For consistency, the term parent is used throughout this project. However, this does not exclude other guardians who function in this capacity.

Five delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project addressed families in which the parents attend Bible study at least 30 percent or more Sundays in a year. Second, this project was limited to the training of parents whose children primarily reside in their home. Third, pastoral visitation took place for no less than ten families and no more than thirty families to ensure that all visits can occur within the prescribed period of time. Fourth, only ministers on staff at SOBC led the training of families so that consistency is ensured. With adequate training, however, other church leaders, such as elders and deacons, should be able to teach families this practice. Finally, the project was confined to a twenty-one-week timeframe. This gave adequate time to prepare the family worship guide and ensure an adequate time to make the prescribed pastoral visits.

Two limitations impacted this project’s efficacy and transferability. First, results may vary significantly in congregations where the pastor or those responsible for pastoral care do not teach families individually and instead opt for a different approach, such as group lecture or simple dissemination of family worship resources. Second, the time constraint has the potential to emphasize the reported growth in knowledge but could minimize the observable change in family practice. Knowledge may be instantaneous with practice lagging behind.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to train the parents of Shady Oaks Baptist Church, Hurst, Texas, to lead family worship in their homes.
Goals

Four goals enabled the successful incorporation of family worship into the daily lives of families at SOBC.

1. Assess the current understanding of home-based family discipleship among families with children residing in the home who are active members of SOBC.

2. Develop a weekly family worship guide that is given to parents every Sunday for the following week’s family worship.

3. Equip parents of SOBC by means of pastoral visitation to lead family worship while using the family worship guide.

4. Evaluate the practice of family worship in the home to ensure competency in leadership has been established.

Defined means of measurement and benchmarks for success are established for each of the goals.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to assess the current understanding of home-based family discipleship among families with children residing in the home who are active members of SOBC. This goal was measured by administering the Family Discipleship Perception and Practices Survey (FDPPS) during the Sunday morning Bible study hour at the onset of the project, to classes that included parents. This goal was considered successfully met when at least 35 parents who met the appropriate standards complete the FDPPS and the inventory is analyzed yielding a clearer picture of the family discipleship perceptions and practices among SOBC families. The results of this survey were utilized to provide information about the church’s current family discipleship perceptions and practices in order to better prepare for pastoral visitation in the third goal.

See appendix 1.

SOBC has an average Sunday adult Bible study attendance of 325 adults. Of this group, approximately 70 are parents with children living in the home. The 35 parents required in this goal provided an adequate picture of the general mindsets that exist in the congregation. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in this ministry project.
The second goal was to develop a weekly family worship guide that is given to parents every Sunday for the following week’s family worship. The worship guide provided an outline for the week’s family worship sessions. During the project, thirteen weeks’ worth of worship guides were created and disseminated. This goal was measured by an expert panel of three family worship experts that utilized the Family Worship Guide Evaluation Rubric to evaluate the content and functionality of the guide. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level as well as a documented plan was in place for the continued development of the resource after the project’s completion.

The third goal was to equip parents of SOBC by means of pastoral visitation to lead family worship while using the family worship guide. This goal was measured by administering the Pastoral Visitation Survey that measured the parents’ level of confidence, motivation, and knowledge with respect to leading family worship. The survey was administered in two phases: pre-survey and post-survey. The pre-survey was administered prior to the first pastoral visit. Surveys were sent digitally, as well as a hard copy invitation to participate through the mail, to parents who are members of SOBC and also have children residing in their home. After the survey was completed, parents were trained to lead family worship during an initial pastoral visit. Following a two-week period to allow growth in this practice, a second pastoral visit occurred in which I observed parents as well as gave them a second opportunity for training and clarification on this practice. After the pastoral visits concluded, a post-survey was administered to all parents. This goal was considered successfully met when a t-test for dependent samples

8See appendix 2.

9See appendix 3.

10“Children” includes everyone from birth through high school. These children are ministered to in the preschool, children, and student ministries.

11I led all pastoral visits.
demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The fourth goal was to evaluate the practice of family worship in the home to ensure competency in leadership had been established. As stated in the third goal, I made a second family visit for the sake of observing the leadership of family worship by the parents. This goal was measured by the pastor who utilized the Family Worship Leadership Evaluation\textsuperscript{12} rubric to evaluate the parents’ competency in leading family worship. Evaluation occurred immediately following the second pastoral visit in the absence of the family to ensure objectivity in the assessment. This goal was considered successfully met when 80 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level. This evaluation provided great insight to changes that should be made to the training process moving forward.

**Conclusion**

Family worship is a foreign concept to most parents who are members of SOBC. The personalized care and attention that pastoral visitation provided, encouraged parents to lead their families in this spiritual practice. The fruit from this labor is still being produced. Many families continue in the practice and others have shown interest. The results of their practice will be seen in the future.

\textsuperscript{12}See appendix 4.
CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR TRAINING PARENTS TO LEAD FAMILY WORSHIP

Three passages from Scripture combine to show that parent-led family worship is an integral practice in the home. A formalized time of family worship is not explicitly commanded within these passages; however, these passages create an implicit demand for regular times of focused reflection on the Lord’s commands as well as clarifying the expectation for parental leadership in the spiritual formation of their children. Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Ephesians 6:1-4, 2 Timothy 1:3-5 are addressed to first prioritize a focus on the worship of God, followed by the part parents should play.

The Home as a Hub of Theological Reflection (Deut 6:1-9)

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 shows that God desires parents to make the home a hub of theological reflection. His desire is to create life-long worshipers who fear the Lord and the home is one part in the transformative process. The foundation of that worship is the nature of the Lord and His relationship to His people. The Shema reiterates the comprehensive nature in which His people should worship, while reinforcing parental responsibility.

Life-Long Worshipers (vv. 1-3)

McConville views Deuteronomy 6:1-3 as the conclusion to the preceding chapter and the finale of the speech Moses gives immediately following the Decalogue.¹

Others, such as Craigie, view these verses as the introduction to the next portion of Moses’ address to the Israelites. Despite the disparity between the two views, both agree that chapters 5 and 6 comprise a cohesive argument and instruction for the Israelites to follow as they enter into the Promised Land. McConville reiterates this by stating, “Conceptually, the two chapters are linked by the idea of extending the laws given on Horeb into the regular lives of the people into future generations.”

Mayes believes the “statues and rules” in verse 1 are the same that were introduced in Deuteronomy 4:45 consisting primarily of the Ten Commandments. Nelson broadens the scope past the Decalogue and believes that this phrase also includes all the laws of chapters 12-26. Regardless of scope, the clear expectation of the hearer was to obey the law in the land they were about to possess.

Obedience would indicate an appropriate fear of the Lord. Nelson states that fear “describes a reverence for Yahweh that results in keeping the law.” The result of fear may be obedience, but the impetus for obedience is reverence. Here, obedience is established as a worshipful response to the Lord. For the Israelites to properly worship, they must obey; and to obey, they must love.

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7Ibid.

As verse 2 continues, it is clear that obedience was not to be limited to the first generation of Israelites. The expectation is that obedience, as an indicator of reverence, is passed from one generation to the next. Using language similar to extra-biblical treaties, the author indicates that the commitment to obey should continue through all future generations. Understandably, this includes the children who were hearing the instruction directly from Moses.

The result of faithful obedience would be the blessing of prosperity within the Promised Land. Long life and many descendants are a continuation of the promise given to Abraham generations before. Here, the covenant nature of obedience and blessing is established to remind the Israelites of the faithfulness that is expected from both the Lord and the people.

The Shema (Deut 6:4-9)

The Shema is perhaps the most well-known portion of Deuteronomy for the Christian reader. Gaining its name from the first word in Hebrew, the Shema is one of the most important passages within Judaism. Its prevalence in Jewish religion did not end in the first century at the advent of Christianity. Devout Jews still recite the Shema twice daily during their morning and evening prayers. The importance of the Shema is reflected in Jesus’ own testimony. He quotes the Shema in Mark 12:29 when asked what the greatest commandment is.

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9Mayes, Deuteronomy, 174.

10McConville, Deuteronomy, 140.


The content of the *Shema* is theologically and pragmatically rich. Craigie states that the verses in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 “contain what have been called ‘the fundamental truth of Israel’s religion’ and ‘the fundamental duty founded upon it.’” More simply, the *Shema* discusses the nature of the Lord, the fundamental truth, and the nature of Israel’s worship, the fundamental duty.

**The Nature of the Lord (v. 4)**

As stated, the *Shema* obtained its name from the first word in Hebrew, which is translated as “hear” in English. Merrill points out that to hear “is tantamount to ‘to obey,’ especially in covenant contexts such as this. That is, to hear God without putting into effect the command is not to hear him at all.” Therefore, the Israelites are called to hear and obey what is said.

Following the command to hear and obey, Moses makes a two-part statement about the Lord: “The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deut 6:4b). Scholars wrestling with this passage advocate various translations and corresponding interpretations which fall into two distinct categories. The first group interprets the text to say Israel’s God is unique. Mayes says that this translation “emphasizes the oneness of Yahweh in the face of the multiplicity of the manifestations of Baal.” This view also leans toward an emphasis on the triune nature of God. The second group stresses the claim that God has

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15 Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 162.

16 All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.


18 Ibid.

19 Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 176.
upon Israel. Mayes argues that this viewpoint “emphasizes the exclusiveness of Israel’s worship of Yahweh.”

To be clear these alternate interpretations are not mutually exclusive. On the one hand, the full scope of Scripture allows the monotheistic nature of the Lord to influence interpretation of this verse. On the other hand, the context of covenant language in Deuteronomy permits an interpretation that prioritizes the exclusive relationship the Israelites are to have with God. Nelson reconciles the differences best when he says, “The totality of Israel’s commitment is motivated by Yahweh’s absolute uniqueness.” Simply stated, the nature of the Lord drives the call to obey.

**The Nature of Worship (v. 5)**

Having established the nature of God, the Israelites are now called to action. The Israelites are to “love the Lord” (v. 5a). Willoughby searches Deuteronomy to clarify the implications of this love by saying the Israelites are to fear God, cleave to him, serve him, obey his voice, walk in his ways, and keep his commandments. Deuteronomy speaks to an all-consuming love as does verse 5 specifically. To emphasize the comprehensive nature of how the Israelites should love, the writer begins with the inmost part of one’s being and moves progressively outward. Krouse asserts, “The sense is love must be interior, truly meant, and willing to move into action.” The end effect is that the hearer understands that the love and obedience required is all-encompassing.

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21Mayes, Deuteronomy, 176.

22Nelson, Deuteronomy, 90.


With all your heart. Before any action is taken to express love, one must internalize the decision to love. The decision to love is made in the heart. While this contrasts with the modern understanding of how decisions are made, Merrill argues that “the heart is, in Old Testament anthropology, the seat of the intellect, equivalent to the mind or rational part of humankind.” Rather than a purely emotional response, love from the heart engages the thoughts of the individual. Loving with the heart communicates a love that is rooted in the decisive mind. Love like this is a proactive choice rather than a reactionary emotive response. The command to love is easily obeyed because it is contingent on the will rather than outside forces.

With all your soul. From here the decision to love expands outside of the heart and into the rest of the individual. Merrill asserts, “The soul refers to the invisible part of the individual, the person qua person including the will and sensibilities.” McConville extends this idea when he says, “The force of the phrase is to require a devotion that is single-minded and complete.” The idea of single-mindedness leaves no room for variance. Completeness, on the other hand, continues the idea of the comprehensive nature of the command to love.

With all your might. With the heart and the soul both addressed, Moses continues by adding the final element to this triad, might, or as some translations say, strength. Merrill states, “The strength is, of course, the physical side with all its functions and capacities.” McConville expands the idea of might to include not only

25Merrill, Deuteronomy, 164.

26Ibid.

27McConville, Deuteronomy, 142.

28Merrill, Deuteronomy, 164.
natural abilities but resources at the disposal of the hearer. Whether it is an individual’s physical abilities, or the fruit of their labor, Moses has instructed all to be used in the love of the Lord. In turn, the love of the Lord is seen as a comprehensive matter, beginning with the mind, consuming the whole individual, and resulting in action.

**Dual Parental Responsibilities (vv. 6-9)**

It is only by acting in obedience to the command to love that the worship of the Lord is visibly manifest. The final four verses of this Deuteronomy passage express a dual responsibility for the hearers, especially those that are parents. While the responsibilities begin with individuals, they come to fruition in the home.

As this passage begins a list of imperatives is given. Two specifically shape the tone of Moses’ argument. First, the commands “shall be on your heart” (Deut 6:6). Second, “You shall teach them diligently to your children” (Deut 6:7). This twofold command implies that obedience is first internalized and then is expressed in action.

**Make it personal (v. 6).** Remembering that the heart is virtually synonymous with the mind, the audience is instructed to think about the commands of the Lord. It is not a stretch to understand “on your heart” to mean “to commit to memory.” Memorization was not the end goal, however. Craigie asserts that “the people were to think on them and meditate about them, so that obedience would not be a matter of formal legalism, but a response based on understanding.” Full comprehension of what was being asked of the people would promote comprehensive obedience.

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29McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

30Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

Teach them everywhere (vv. 7-9). Obedience was not to be limited to one generation of Israel. Verse 7 begins with the instruction to teach these commands to children. Instruction to children served the primary purpose of continuing the covenant into the future. Merrill points out, “An important demand of the covenant relationship was that it perpetuated beyond the immediate generation of those with whom the Lord made it, for its promises and provisions were for generations yet unborn.”32 The only way for these truths to transfer to the next generation was for them to be taught. Parents were given primary responsibility to do just that: teach.

Teaching in Israel was very different than what American Christians are accustomed to today. While other ancient societies such as Egypt had developed education systems, Israel had no such thing. In turn, fathers generally handled most instruction in the home.33 The type of teaching that was done was more than a mere dissemination of information to disinterested pupils. The expectation was that it would permanently etch the commands of the Lord into the hearts of children so that they would never stray from the covenantal relationship into which they were born.34 Teaching that achieved results like this required a holistic approach utilizing several methods to achieve greater efficacy.

Verse 7 provides, in a general sense, a method of teaching that encompasses all realms of daily living. Instruction should occur from the beginning of the day to the end of the day, and from within the home to outside of the home. Teaching should occur everywhere and at all times. Craigie simplifies the instruction given to parents: “In summary, the commandments were to permeate every sphere of the life of man.”35

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32 Merrill, Deuteronomy, 166.


34 Merrill, Deuteronomy, 167.

Those who read this generalization too quickly might miss the significant emphasis that is placed on the home. For the Israelites, an all-encompassing approach to covenant education does not engage the home as a simple nicety or superfluous add-on. Just the opposite is true. The home was to be the central locus for theological instruction and reflection as it was the primary location in which parents and children spent their time together.

Verses 8-9 continue to express the prominence that these commands should garner. Requiring a sign on the hand, frontlets on the eyes, as well as notation on doorposts and gates assured that these commands would not slip into obscurity. Craigie clarifies, “It is uncertain whether the verses were intended to be taken literally during their original context, or whether they had a metaphorical sense. In either case, they came to be taken literally in the course of Jewish history.” As a result, it was impossible for Jewish children to be ignorant of the commands of the Lord if their parents were faithful to the calling God gave.

**Family Worship in Deuteronomy**

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 never explicitly calls families to partake in daily family worship as it is defined in this paper. However, it is clear that, for the Jewish people, the home was to be a place of theological reflection and instruction. Parents who spent time memorizing and reflecting the instructions of the Lord could then lead their children to do the same. Instruction that encompassed every realm of man, especially the home, would lead to Moses’ desired result; a loving devotion to God, expressed through obedience, and resulting in the transmission of a covenantal faith to the children of the covenant. Family worship is one familial discipline that serves the purpose of promoting the loving obedience espoused by Moses.

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A Father’s Responsibility (Eph 6:1-4)

A parent’s responsibility to lead children toward obedience in the Lord does not end with the Old Testament. Ephesians 6:1-4 shows that a father is ultimately the parent responsible for leading family worship because he is the one responsible for the spiritual instruction of the children. However, his responsibility takes place within a relationship in which the child has responsibilities as well.

Household Codes

Ephesians 6:1-4 falls within a section of the book in which Paul addresses several relationships that would be found within the home. As he addresses the relationship, he is primarily instructing both parties with regard to their personal responsibilities. Beginning first with husbands and wives, Paul instructs how they should love one another. It is following this instruction that he moves on to parents and children; namely, fathers and children. Clinton Arnold states the significance of this portion of Ephesians: “Properly ordered domestic relationships lived out under the lordship of Christ are foundational to the free and unhindered work of the Spirit in the lives of believers in the community.”37 These proper relationships mark the believer who is filled with the Spirit.38

Children (vv. 1-3)

Within the passages dealing with the household code, Paul first addresses those under authority and then addresses the authority figure.39 Accordingly, children are addressed first; however, being addressed first does not mean that their responsibilities

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are primary or if neglected negate the responsibility of the father. These instructions are
to be followed even if the other party fails to uphold the expectations placed on them.

By addressing children and placing expectations on their shoulders, Paul is
assuming they are old enough to understand the instructions being given.\textsuperscript{40} They would
also be young enough to still be under the authority of their parents. Arnold suggests that
their age range may be somewhere between early elementary to late teens or early
twenties.\textsuperscript{41} This range may be too limited though. Children understand more than they are
given credit for. Many parents of young children have moments where the comprehension
of their children surprises them. Often, comprehension expressed with a corresponding
behavior outpaces language skills and the ability to vocally articulate comprehension. As
such, it would not be a stretch to imagine that “children” would range as early as two
years old or before.

Additionally, Paul’s address to children presupposes their presence within the
congregation, which means that in the early church, at least in Ephesus, children were
present within the corporate gathering for worship and instruction.\textsuperscript{42} While certainly the
child must be present to hear the instruction, this does not assume the child is a Christian.\textsuperscript{43}

\textbf{Obey Your Parents (v. 1)}

The instruction children are given is plain and readily understood: obey your
parents. Paul uses the word \textit{obey} to remove any ambiguity. Rather than saying honor or
respect, Paul uses the same word that he typically uses in reference to submission to

\textsuperscript{40}Uprichard, \textit{Ephesians}, 326.

\textsuperscript{41}Arnold, \textit{Ephesians}, 415.

\textsuperscript{42}Uprichard, \textit{Ephesians}, 326.

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid.
Christ.\textsuperscript{44} Despite the reciprocal demand being placed on the father in verse 4, Paul asserts that obedience is owed to both parents, the mother and the father.\textsuperscript{45}

Obedience to parents was to be “in the Lord.” While this could imply that obedience is required to parents who are Christians, what is most likely is that obedience to parents is a form of obedience to the Lord.\textsuperscript{46} This view emphasizes that obedience is not due to the parent’s own authority. Obedience comes because of the Lord’s authority.\textsuperscript{47} Obedience like this transcends the prototypical “because I said so” validation of parental authority and gives a motivation that is rooted in respect for the Lord Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{48}

Finally, obedience to parents is viewed as “right.” This could mean that it is the natural order of things.\textsuperscript{49} In the context in which Ephesians was written, as well as today, the predominant cultural standard expected that children obey their parents. Though, the “rightness” of obedience is far greater than depending on cultural standards. Obedience is right because obedience is what the Lord expects.\textsuperscript{50} The expectation is clearly seen in God’s Law.

**Honor Your Mother and Father (vv. 2-3)**

Paul follows the expectation to obey by supporting it with a portion of the Decalogue. Here, both parents remain in view. Despite the patriarchal society of the time,

\textsuperscript{44}Uprichard, *Ephesians*, 327.

\textsuperscript{45}Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 788.

\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., 786.

\textsuperscript{47}Uprichard, *Ephesians*, 327.

\textsuperscript{48}Arnold, *Ephesians*, 415-16.

\textsuperscript{49}Uprichard, *Ephesians*, 328.

\textsuperscript{50}Arnold, *Ephesians*, 416.
both parents are to receive honor. As such, the mother had as much claim on obedience and honor as did the father.\textsuperscript{51}

However, the end goal of obedience did not terminate with the parents’ glory. Obedience and honor toward parents is the first step to obedience and honor toward God.\textsuperscript{52} Children who grow up disobeying and dishonoring parents will struggle to rightly show honor to God as they age.\textsuperscript{53} Harry Uprichard clearly states, “Disobedience to parents is a characteristic of the pagan Gentile world.”\textsuperscript{54} Disobedience and dishonor toward parents has no place in a home that is ordered by the Spirit. He goes on to clarify, “The possibility of disobedience only comes into view where demands are excessively harsh, immoral, or where they conflict with duty to God.”\textsuperscript{55}

Children that choose to honor their parents are given a corresponding promise “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land” (Eph 6:3). While there is minor controversy as to how to interpret the promise, whether literally or figuratively, both interpretations have credibility. The child who obeys and honors his parents will naturally have higher odds of living a long and fulfilled life.\textsuperscript{56} Additionally, an eternal life awaits all who follow the Lord and His commands.

The role of the child in the Christian home is simple and straightforward: obey your parents and give them the honor they deserve. However, like each of the relationships Paul delineates in Ephesians, a corresponding expectation is placed on the second party.

\textsuperscript{51} Hoehner, \textit{Ephesians}, 788.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 789.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{54} Uprichard, \textit{Ephesians}, 325.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 330.

\textsuperscript{56} Hoehner, \textit{Ephesians}, 793.
Fathers, the Corresponding Party (v. 4)

Having addressed the child, Paul now turns to the father. The term “father” could apply to both parents, but due to the hierarchy that existed within the home, the term is significant.\(^{57}\) Had Paul wanted to instruct both parents at this point he would have needed to make it explicitly clear due to the contemporary thought at the time.\(^{58}\) Though a few modern translations utilize the term “parents” in this verse,\(^{59}\) “fathers” is the most accurate translation.\(^{60}\)

In Israel, the father had the ultimate responsibility for and authority over the whole family. This extended even to adult sons and their wives if they resided in his home.\(^{61}\) The authority was so complete that even in the matter of life and death, the father had the final say.\(^{62}\) It is in the context of paternal dominance that Paul gives an instruction that would most likely shock the hearer.

**Do not exasperate your children.** Despite total control over his children, the father is instructed not to exasperate them. The total control of fathers had the propensity to lead to those who would “lay down the law” in order to gain the obedience they were due.\(^{63}\) However, as Hoehner writes, “The irritation caused by nagging and demeaning fathers in the context of everyday life may in turn cause children to become angry. This anger grows, no doubt, out of the frustration of never being able to please fathers who


\(^{59}\)See TEV and CEV.

\(^{60}\)Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.


\(^{63}\)Best, *Ephesians*, 568.
constantly nag or demean them.” To stay away from exasperating his children, Andrew Lincoln believes a father must avoid attitudes, words, and actions which would drive a child to angry exasperation or resentment and thus rules out excessively severe discipline, unreasonably harsh demands, abuse of authority, arbitrariness, unfairness, constant nagging and condemnation, subjecting child to humiliation, and all forms of gross insensitivity to a child’s needs and sensibilities.

Anger stemming from this type of treatment would produce the opposite effect than that of what was desired. Exasperation in the life of a child had, as it does to this day, the potential to give the devil a foothold and lead the child to sin. As can be observed, this type of anger and resentment toward fathers can last a lifetime if left without remedy. Avoiding anger would create an atmosphere in which the child can learn without hesitation because of the trust and love he had for the instructor.

**Bring them up.** Rather than inducing anger, fathers are instructed to “bring them up.” The idea Paul presents is similar to the nourishment a husband would give his own body in Ephesians 5:29. Uprichard reminds the reader that this is the same kind of nourishment Christ provides for the church. This type of affectionate care should typify the Christian father. In this relationship, devoid of anger and full of care, fathers would have ample opportunity to instruct their children in the ways of the Lord.

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64Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 796.
68Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 797.
**Discipline and instruction.** Paul uses two words to signify the ways in which a father should “bring up” his children: παιδεία and νοοθεσία, translated as discipline and instruction respectively. The term for discipline includes chastisement, but is broad enough to be used as a general term for education.\(^{70}\) Discipline and (educational) training were closely associated terms in Antiquity and difficult to separate.\(^ {71}\) This type of discipline connotes something positive rather than merely a negative response to misbehavior. On the other hand, instruction conveys the desire to exert influence on the mind.\(^ {72}\) Dewitt explains that νοοθεσία “signifies the gentlest sort of instruction in conduct, free from rebuke or reprimand and characterized by timely suggestions rather than sharp imperatives.”\(^ {73}\)

**Of the Lord.** Discipline and instruction in the Christian home is not the same as that of non-Christian households, on the contrary, it is “of the Lord.” Hoehner makes this contrast abundantly clear: “The Father's training and admonition is not to be anthropocentric as it was in Hellenism nor centered around the law as in the rabbinc but, rather, Christocentric.”\(^ {74}\) The end goal of discipline and instruction was not for the child to simply be obedient or a well-rounded member of society. In his classic commentary on Ephesians, Dale expresses this truth well:

Parents should care more for the loyalty of their children to Christ than for anything besides, more for this than for their health, their intellectual vigour and brilliance,

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\(^ {70}\)Uprichard, *Ephesians*, 332.


\(^ {74}\)Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 798.
their material prosperity, their social position, their exemption from great sorrows and great misfortunes. Their loyalty to Christ must be cared for, not because it will be a defence and guarantee of the moral virtues and a protection against vices which might end in disgrace and ruin, but for its own sake and for Christ’s sake. Only when our children have found eternal righteousness and eternal life in Him, has the trust we have received from Him been successfully discharged.  

Simple obedience and success in this world pale in comparison to what fathers can encourage in their children’s lives. Only when a father brings up his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord is he being faithful to this glorious ideal.

**Family Worship in Ephesians**

In a culture in which children leave the home for school, have the opportunity to attend age-graded ministries at church, and have professionals available for practically any type of training, fathers must be incredibly intentional if they desire to bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. It is simply too easy to outsource it these days. However, to do so would be to abdicate a holy responsibility.

Harry Uprichard distinctly sees the implicit argument for father-led family worship:

> What an incentive towards family worship in the upbringing of our children, and towards using Scripture relevantly and naturally in the home setting! We find the same approach urged in the Old Testament days (Deut. 6:6-9). The Christian home is the primary place for instruction of children and youth in the Word. This responsibility must not be offloaded onto the Sunday school or the church.  

Fathers must take their place of leadership in the home when it comes to the spiritual training of their children.

**When Dad Is Not Present (2 Tim 1:3-5)**

Though called to lead, fathers are not always faithful in their call to lead spiritually within the home. Second Timothy 1:3-5 shows that mothers are capable of spiritually leading their family in the absence of a father’s spiritual guidance. Accordingly,

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76Uprichard, *Ephesians*, 332.
a mother’s leadership of family worship in the home is to be encouraged in homes such as these.

**A Heritage of Faith (vv. 3-4)**

This second letter to Timothy opens in familiar style as Paul classifies himself as an apostle of Christ and identifies the intended recipient. Following this brief introduction Paul begins expressing thanks. While it is not certain, it is safe to assume that Paul is thanking God for Timothy’s faith as evidenced in the following two verses. 77

In the midst of his thanksgiving Paul inserts a reference to his forefathers. This reference serves as a parallel to Timothy’s heritage of faith. 78 Paul served faithfully in the same manner as his forefathers, and he now asks Timothy to do the same. Albeit, those in closest relationship to Timothy are foremothers. William Mounce states, “The point of the comparison is that both have a rich spiritual heritage that functions as an encouragement.” 79

The last half of verse 3 and the whole of verse 4 is comprised of four phrases in the English text that reveal the depth of emotion Paul experienced at the time of this writing. Paul prayed constantly for Timothy. Every time he prayed he was reminded of how intense his desire was to be reunited. As none of Paul’s disciples had shown greater loyalty to Paul than Timothy, he remembered back to how that loyalty was expressed in tears at their parting. 80 His love for Timothy and desire to see him created a great anticipation of the joy he would feel when they were finally reunited. When they are reunited, Paul is certain that he will witness a continuation of a sincere faith in Timothy.


78 Ibid.


Sincere Faith (v. 5)

Amid his appeal to Timothy, Paul brings attention to the sincere faith that he sees within Timothy. This sincere faith is a cause for Paul to be thankful. While enduring suffering and persecution, Paul sees a “faith that neither wavered nor was double-minded.”

To hear of faith like this would do nothing but encourage him as he thought about the future of his legacy as a faithful servant of Christ and the future of the apostolic church.

However, just as with his own faith, Paul points out that Timothy’s faith did not begin with himself. Paul had a heritage of faith that shaped his ministry. Similarly, Timothy had a heritage of faith that should shape his. Distinct to Timothy’s heritage was that it flowed through his grandmother and mother rather than his father. In Acts 16:1 one reads that Timothy’s father was a Greek. The form of the sentence in Acts 16:1 suggests that Timothy’s father was neither a Jew nor a believer. Additionally, due to the reference to Timothy’s circumcision as an adult, it can be assumed that his father was opposed to his circumcision on the eighth day following his birth, as was the Jewish custom, despite his mother’s faith. Without reading too much into the situation, it is safe to assume that Timothy’s father was at best neutral to the teachings of the Christian faith. Whether his father was alive at the time of his conversion would merely be speculation. However, what is clear is that there is no biblical record of Timothy’s father taking an active role in the spiritual instruction of his child.

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84 Ibid.
Alternately, there is an explicit biblical record of Timothy’s mother taking an active role. In 2 Timothy 3:14-15, Paul implores Timothy to continue in the things he learned through childhood instruction in the Holy Scriptures. Though his mother and grandmother’s names are not used, the Greek text implies Lois and Eunice are the ones being referenced as his teachers.85 Despite a husband who was not engaged in spiritual instruction, Eunice persevered to teach her son the Word.86 This foundation bore fruit when upon hearing the gospel, faith in Christ was birthed in Timothy’s heart.

It is important to note that Paul does not insinuate that Timothy’s faith has somehow been limited because of his father’s inactivity during the formation process. Eunice and Lois are commended as the forbearers of the faith that lives within Timothy. It was the faith expression of a “true” Jew who, upon hearing the gospel, believed in Jesus as the promised Messiah.87 Timothy’s faith was a deep faith,88 and it had greater permanence because of the faith of the women who preceded him.89

Gordon Fee summarizes Paul’s appeal to Timothy: “Don’t lose heart, because just as my ministry has continuity with my forbearers, so does yours. Don’t forget your roots; they go way back, and your own faith is like that of your mother and grandmother.”90 Eunice and Lois had been more than adequate spiritual leaders for Timothy. Despite a spiritually absent father, Eunice’s work paid off.

85Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 443.
86Larson, *1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 305.
87Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 185.
Family Worship in 2 Timothy

Scripture does not provide much insight into what resistance Eunice and Lois were met with when they made efforts to provide spiritual instruction to Timothy. What is clear, however, is that despite a father who was spiritually absent from Timothy’s life, the consistent efforts of the women in his family made an impact that overcame any adversity that may have been present. Eunice’s personal faith allowed her to persevere in the instruction of her child and in turn a sincere faith lived in him. Though every family’s dynamic is unique, there may be instances in which a spiritually absent father relinquishes his duty to lead family worship to his wife. At that point, in faithful service to the Lord, the wife should faithfully and in humility take on the responsibility of leading her children spiritually.

Conclusion

For the Lord to receive the honor He is due, His people must hear and obey His commands. Obedience communicates true love and reverence for the creator. Additionally, obedience should not be limited to one generation of followers. Parents are commanded to make their homes a place of spiritual reflection so that their children are instructed in the ways of the Lord. A practical way to reflect in the home is through family worship. Due to the expectation placed on fathers to “bring up” their children in the Lord, it is their responsibility to lead family worship. However, if a father is spiritually absent, mothers can and should take the lead in facilitating family worship in their homes.
CHAPTER 3
PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR
PASTORAL VISITATION AS A TOOL FOR TRAINING
PARENTS TO LEAD FAMILY WORSHIP

It is one thing to have the goal of training parents to lead family worship in their homes. It is another altogether thing to be successful at doing so. Effectiveness in training is crucial if the practice of family worship will have the intended outcome of shifting the church’s culture as well as promoting kingdom-centered families. Accordingly, efficacy must be the driving factor behind the chosen method of instruction. Pastoral visitation offers a personalized approach in ministering to parents that will help solidify family worship as a regular practice within the home. Three truths ground this strategy. First, ministers need to embrace the full role of a pastor, not just that of a preacher. Second, visitation is not a new concept, nor has it been relegated to a place of antiquity, solely observable in Christian history. Finally, for family worship to manifest in the life of the church, practical training must take place.

Faithful Shepherds

Taking on the full scope of responsibilities of a pastor requires that he view himself first and foremost as a shepherd of his flock. In Scripture, the word pastor literally means shepherd.¹ The shepherd has served as a motif throughout Scripture to describe spiritual leaders. Laniak has exhaustively covered the motif of shepherding as it appears in Scripture and gives a comprehensive analysis of each occurrence.² Croft draws

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²Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in*
attention to the most important example of shepherding when he writes, “Jesus proves to be the long-awaited good shepherd who suffers for God’s people by laying down his life for the sheep.”

Jesus is the ultimate example of how pastors should shepherd their flock; those who shepherd the flock do so under His authority. Croft makes it clear that shepherding in the New Testament follows the pattern of Jesus’ ministry. “Peter’s exhortation to pastors can be summarized in a single sentence: ‘Be shepherds of God’s flock under your care until the Chief Shepherd appears.’” Accordingly, ministers today are under-shepherds of the One Shepherd to whom an account will be given. To be faithful under-shepherds, ministers must focus on three critical aspects of shepherding: where they live, how they lead, and what they sacrifice.

Faithful shepherds can be found among the sheep. Croft states, “Faithfully shepherding the flock implies deliberate involvement in the lives of the people.” Rinne echoes this sentiment by saying, “The shepherd is among the sheep. He’s not off somewhere else.” Too often, ministers do not live in close association with their flock. The busyness of ministry comes at a cost that is oftentimes meaningful relationships with members of the church. However, to allow a distance to form between sheep and shepherd puts the minister at a distinct disadvantage to accomplish needed ministry.

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5Jeramie Rinne, Church Elders: How to Shepherd God’s People Like Jesus (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 35.

6Croft and Mohler, Prepare Them to Shepherd, 57.

7Rinne, Church Elders, 36.
Laniak writes, “The task of shepherds is determined daily by the changing needs of the flock under their care. ‘Pastors’ are generalists.”8 Shepherds meet the needs of the flock, but they can only do so if they are close enough to know the needs.

Leading the flock as an under-shepherd is a challenging task. The minister needs a constant reminder that he is under authority while he is exerting authority. Laniak states, “Authority is a feature of the shepherd’s role, but one comprehensively qualified by the reminder that elder are caring for the flock of God.”9 As such, any authority leveraged over the sheep should necessarily be for their benefit. “To be a good shepherd—and this is consistently the biblical concern—means to be accountable for the lives and well-being of the sheep.”10

Finally, shepherds must be willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the sheep. Laniak explains that Jesus made great attempts to prepare His disciples to be sacrificial under-shepherds: “They will eventually take care of his flock and risk their lives like their master.”11 Therefore, shepherds must be willing to minister to their flock even if it comes at a high price.

Advantages of Visitation

Shepherding presents a balance of corporate leadership and personal attention. Consequently, a shepherd must both be a preacher and provide visitation. There is a tendency for ministers today to lean into their preaching responsibilities while shying away from other pastoral responsibilities, such as visitation. To do so severely limits the ability to train parents to lead family worship in their home. This observation is not an attempt to diminish the value of quality preaching. As to family worship training, a

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8Laniak, Shepherds After My Own Heart, 247.
9Ibid., 233.
10Ibid., 247.
11Ibid., 211.
A sermon series focused on family discipleship would serve wonderfully to prepare the hearts of the congregation to receive individualized training. However, to depend strictly on preaching to accomplish the task of training would ultimately lead to failure. Three significant factors exist that greatly benefit those who choose to lean into their pastoral role rather than attempting to leverage solely their position as preacher: location, time, and results.

The first factor, location, speaks to the actual locale in which acts of ministry occur. By nature, preaching requires the pastor to be physically removed from his audience. Though, in some small churches the actual distance from the pastor to the congregation is quite small, there exists a felt divide between pastor and laity. Visitation on the other hand enables the minister to get on the “home turf” of an individual. Sitting around a common table in the comforting environment of the home offers several different advantages when training parents to lead family worship.

The first advantage is clarity. Hendricks is often quoted as saying, “If it’s a mist in the pulpit, it’s a fog in the pew.”\(^2\) Though the goal of this quote is to promote clarity from the pulpit, it introduces the reality that there is a good degree of information lost between pulpit and pew. Visitation limits the size of the audience as well as increases the ability for discourse. Correspondingly, clarity and understanding increase.

The second advantage is personalized application. Dever has developed an excellent tool called an “application grid” to use during his sermon preparation.\(^3\) He uses it to think through how each point of his sermon applies to nine various categories of hearers that may be in the room on any given Sunday. The tool itself acknowledges the limitations that sermons have for personalized application. Because visitation allows a

\(^2\) This quote is frequently attributed to Howard Hendricks, former professor at The Dallas Theological Seminary.

narrow audience, application can be personalized with a great level of detail. While a sermon may address the need for family worship in the home, a visit can address specific strategies for engaging a three-year-old and a thirteen-year-old at the same time during a Scripture reading.

The final advantage to be discussed, though admittedly there are more, is the opportunity for immediate application where the training took place. Sermons must make it from the church to the home and must wait to be applied when a hypothetical situation finally becomes reality. However, what is learned during visitation can be immediately applied in the home during the family’s daily routine.

The second factor that impacts visitation is time, specifically the length of time a pastor can communicate with his audience and the frequency with which he is able to communicate. Preachers frequently lament the push they feel on a weekly basis to write concise sermons so that a church member does not complain about getting out of church late. Even the best content is lost when it takes too long to listen to. Visitation provides a situation in which teaching feels brief, even if it takes twice as long as a typical sermon. Because visitation can feel much more like a conversation with a friend than a classroom lecture, pastors who visit are afforded more time to discuss whatever spiritual matter they want to address.

Additionally, pastors who visit do not have to worry about their church families missing something important because they missed a Sunday service. Most preachers build on previous sermons whether they are preaching expository or topical sermons. Accordingly, a missed sermon may put church members behind in learning all that the preacher would have them learn. Conversely, because a pastor knows every visit he has made, he can take an ongoing teaching approach that brings everyone up to speed at his own pace.

The final factor that impacts visitation is the results. Results are gathered corresponding to the method of instruction. Visitation allows for results to be obtained
over time, individually, and accurately; whereas reliance solely on preaching allows results to be observed only on a grand scale. Anecdotal stories may flow in from time to time, but these are the exception and certainly do not paint a clear picture of efficacy. Success and failure cannot be determined by simply waiting for stories to trickle in. Visitation allows the minister to readily observe the results of the teaching in a way that preaching simply cannot compare with. Jones states, “Families within the congregation should be divided up among the leaders for regular follow-up.”\footnote{Brian Howard Honett, “Family: A Context for Worship,” in Practical Family Ministry, ed. Timothy Paul Jones and John David Trentham (Nashville: Randall House, 2015), 25.} Visitation is a simple method that can be utilized to follow-up with families because it fosters a reciprocal conversation rather than a one-way flow of information. Jones continues to bolster the point for individualized attention to families regarding training in family worship: “Just as you would continue to follow up with a family that was struggling in other areas, leaders must make an organized effort to regularly help those families with their practice of worship.”\footnote{Ibid.} Families deserve individualized attention and when they receive it there will be fruit.

\section*{Shepherding Conclusion}

There are clearly distinct advantages of visitation over preaching regarding training parents how to lead family worship. However, as previously mentioned, preaching still has incredible value within the local church and is certainly a foundational practice in healthy churches. In an ideal situation, a church member would be shepherded by sitting under quality preaching as a part of the flock and be cared for personally, through visitation, as an individual sheep. Preaching presents an opportunity to teach the flock what the pastor wishes would take place in the lives of individual sheep, while visitation teaches the individual sheep what the pastor wishes would take place in all the flock. The
faithful shepherd will be conscious of both his preaching ministry and his visitation ministry.

**Historical and Modern Visitation**

Family worship enabled by pastoral visitation has historic roots but appears even today as a priority within many churches, albeit not as many as it should. Two pastors from the past as well as the present will be discussed to show the timelessness of family worship enabled by pastoral visitation.

**Historical Practice**

Richard Baxter and Charles Spurgeon had very different ministries. However, each one was successful in his own right. Baxter wrote extensively, producing at least 150 books, and became one of the most successful authors in British history. Spurgeon on the other hand, was best known for his preaching. His more than thirty-five hundred sermons are still revered today.

**Richard Baxter.** Richard Baxter is known for his work *The Reformed Pastor,* in which he casts a compelling vision for both pastoral visitation and family worship in the home. Joel Beeke gives the context in which Baxter ministered:

> In 1641, Baxter became curate at Kidderminster. Though many among a rather corrupt and crude population of handloom workers were initially offended by his forceful preaching and stress on a controlled Lord’s Supper and on church discipline, his seventeen-year ministry there bore substantial fruit. He preached as “a dying man to dying men,” which, with the Spirit’s blessing, resulted in numerous conversions. His praying was no less intense: “His soul took wing for heaven and rapt up the souls of others with him.”

During his time in Kidderminster, Baxter was a passionate minister who emphasized family worship and spent a great deal of time visiting families to train them in this practice.

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17 Ibid., 62.
Baxter viewed family worship as a Christian duty. If a father failed to lead his family in this practice, he was not only being irresponsible, he was committing a sin. In *The Reformed Pastor*, Baxter encourages other ministers to take seriously the task of admonishing those who do not lead their families well:

> Go occasionally among them, when they are likely to be most at leisure, and ask the master of the family whether he prays with them, and reads the Scripture, or what he doth? Labor to convince such as neglect this, of their sin; and if you have opportunity, pray with them before you go, and give them an example of what you would have them do. Perhaps, too, it might be well to get a promise from them, that they will make more conscience of their duty for the future."\(^{18}\)

Family worship was critical to the success of his ministry and would be viewed as one of the most significant contributions he made to his community.

Though many Puritan pastors emphasized the need for family worship, few went to such extremes as to instruct their congregations in this practice. Baxter was known to visit every home in his congregation at least twice a year. His visits were not mere social calls. Beeke gives an overview of the strategy Baxter used during his visits:

> He went from home to home with an assistant, speaking with each family for one hour and providing each family with an edifying book or two, usually written by himself. He said of these visits, “Few families went from me without some tears, or seemingly serious promises (to strive) for a godly life.” He added, “Some ignorant persons, who have been so long unprofitable hearers, have got more knowledge and remorse of conscience in half an hour’s close disclosure, than they did from ten year’s public preaching.”\(^{19}\)

Baxter obviously felt that visitation was an incredibly effective method of shepherding his flock and could witness its impact firsthand. Beeke explains, “The home visits bore fruit. The congregation kept overflowing its meeting place so that five galleries had to be added.”\(^{20}\) The connection he made in the home translated to commitment from families to the local church.


\(^{19}\)Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 63.

\(^{20}\)Ibid., 64.
Richard Baxter’s ministry was thoroughly effective at mobilizing families to engage in family worship. Beek relays this truth:

When Baxter came to Kidderminster, scarcely one family on each street among the 800 families honored God in family worship. By the end of his ministry in 1661, there were streets on which every family did so. On the Sabbath, he writes, “you might hear an hundred families singing Psalms and repeating sermons, as you passed through the streets.”

Baxter is certainly accomplished in training parents to lead family worship. However, he is not the only pastor to express an interest in this matter.

Charles Spurgeon. Though known as the “Prince of Preachers” and known for the massive groups of people he preached to on a regular basis, Charles Spurgeon had a desire for both worship in the home as well as opportunities for pastoral visitation. In 1908, Spurgeon preached a sermon entitled, “A Pastoral Visit.” Within the sermon he highlights not only his desire that his congregation would worship together in their homes, but also his desire to visit them individually to train them in this matter.

Spurgeon began his sermon by saying,

Now let me attempt to describe a church in a house, meaning, all the while, to be asking you whether you have a church in your house. A church, according to the New Testament, consists of converted persons, or persons who profess to be converted. No visible church is absolutely pure. A church must be taken upon its own profession, consisting as it does of persons who avow themselves to be followers of and believers in Christ, having been converted from darkness to light by the Spirit of God.

His description of a church in a house leaves no question that he expects his congregants, if they are professing believers, to be active worshippers in their homes. He continues,

But it strikes me that a number of converted people are not necessarily a church. In order to form a church, they must worship together. Happy is the household which meets every morning for prayer! Happy are they who let not the evening depart

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21Beke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 64.


23Ibid., 362.
without uniting in supplication! Brothers and sisters, I wish it were more common—
I wish it were universal, with all professors of religion—to have family prayer.24

For Spurgeon, any home in which there were professing believers should accordingly have
worship together. This belief is best seen in his own life. In Dallimore’s biography on
Spurgeon, he recalls a visitor to the Spurgeon home who once wrote,

One of the most helpful hours of my visits to Westwood was the hour of family
prayer. At six o’clock all the household gathered into the study for worship. Usually
Mr. Spurgeon would himself lead the devotions. The portion read was invariably
accompanied with exposition. How amazingly helpful those homely and gracious
comments were.25

Spurgeon continued his sermon by expressing a desire to meet with families
individually. Spurgeon says,

Having thus described a church in a house, I propose what I cannot often
accomplish among you, though I wish I could, and that is to pay you a pastoral visit.
I am going to knock at your door, take a chair and sit down, and ask you a few
simple questions. The first is, have you a church in your house?26

While Baxter had a systemic approach to his visits, spending two days a week with his
church members, Spurgeon seemingly felt no such freedom. However, this does not mean
he did not make visits. Simply, he desired for the time to do more. Spurgeon knew that
efficacy depended on proximity. He desired to meet with his people to train them in the
practice of family worship. Accordingly, he said of his visits, “Before leaving, however, I
venture to give a little advice as to the way of having a church in a house.”27 He then
addresses a variety of issues relating to leading family worship. Spurgeon viewed pastoral
visitation as an effective means for training parents to lead family worship in their homes.

Spurgeon had a very different ministry than Richard Baxter. However, the
conclusion of his sermon reveals a heart that seems to echo a shared sentiment:


27Ibid.
May the day soon come when the church in your house shall include every person in the family, not one being left out! What a happy world it would be if there was such a church in every house! It would be heaven begun below! The angels might then mistake earth for heaven and linger so long that they would need to be recalled to Paradise, making the mistake that they were already in Paradise! Oh, may we live to see the day when walking down a street in London, we shall hear, at the appointed hour in every house, the song of praise and know that no door will be locked for the night till first the Lord has been asked to keep watch and ward over the slumbering household!28

**Modern Practice**

The practice of pastoral visitation to train parents in the practice of leading family worship is not to be relegate[d to antiquity. Donald Whitney and Jason Helopoulos both display evidences that these practices are present in their ministries today and have written works to encourage families to participate in this practice. These men are at the forefront of a resurgence of family worship.

**Donald Whitney.** Donald Whitney’s *Family Worship: In the Bible, in History, & in Your Home* was first published in 2006. It has since been updated and was rereleased in 2016. Crossway Press has released a corresponding, video-based, five-day training series to accompany this book. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, endorses the work, saying, “This book belongs in every Christian home and in the hands of every Christian parent.”29

Whitney’s work is meant for parents to read. As such, there is no mention of pastoral visitation as a tool for training parents to lead family worship. However, the book makes a solid case for family worship by providing biblical and historical examples of this practice. Due to the book’s brevity, most parents can read it easily in one sitting.

Simplicity is the key for his prescribed method of family worship: “Basically, there are three elements to family worship: read the Bible, pray, and sing. Only three

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29Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), front cover.
syllables to remember—read, pray, sing." Additionally, Whitney encourages families to take into consideration the specific situation in life in which they find themselves and adjust their plans accordingly. For example, families with younger children are encouraged to use a story Bible if it is beneficial. Additionally, electronic accompaniment is encouraged for those who do not possess the musical ability to lead. While aids can supplement family worship, the tools should never take away from the simplicity of reading, praying, and singing.

Whitney saves his best advice for last: “Start now.” In a challenging yet encouraging pastoral tone, he tasks parents, especially fathers, to begin the practice of family worship immediately, asking, “Isn’t this what you really want to do?” Having made his case for family worship throughout the book, few Christian fathers could in good conscious answer anything but “yes.” However, some may drag their feet. Rather than addressing a comprehensive list of objections to beginning immediately, he dives straight to the core of the issue. Shame is presented as the primary reason fathers would delay starting family worship in their homes. He addresses the emotion fathers who have not led in this way before must be feeling: “He has failed to lead family worship for so long he feels embarrassed to begin now.”

Within his admonition he gives his best piece of encouragement:

Have the manly resolve to tell your family that you want to make an altar to God in your home; that is, you want to make your home a place of worship to God. Exhort

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31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 39.
33 Ibid., 47.
34 Ibid.
the family to put away anything that would keep them from worshiping God with you, and to arise and follow you as you lead them in worshiping God.\textsuperscript{36}

Conviction and action can certainly overcome embarrassment.

**Jason Helopoulos.** Alongside Whitney stands Jason Helopoulos as a modern advocate of family worship. *A Neglected Grace; Family Worship in the Christian Home* is written from the perspective of a pastor and father. It is endorsed by Kevin DeYoung, the Senior Pastor at University Reformed Church where Kevin serves as the Associate Pastor. DeYoung has also endorsed this work through The Gospel Coalition where he serves as a council member.\textsuperscript{37} In the foreword, DeYoung states, “The best, longest lasting motivation (to lead family worship) comes by not feeling terrible for what we could be doing better, but by believing what good God has in store for us.”\textsuperscript{38} When someone reads this book he feels that great things are possible rather than shame or defeat.

At the onset, Helopoulos presents a case for family worship founded on the idea that the practice has been forgotten in most Christian circles.\textsuperscript{39} His purposes to reclaim what has been neglected in Christian homes for far too long: “This glorious expression of our Christian faith used to mark Christian homes, but over the past one hundred years, the evangelical church seems to have forgotten about it. It is time for us to explore and promote family worship in the church again.”\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{36}Whitney, *Family Worship*, 49.


\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid.
Foundational to his case is the idea that families were created to be worshipers of God.\textsuperscript{41} He claims, “In the history of the church and the history of God’s people in Scripture, there have always been three clearly defined spheres of worship: secret worship, corporate worship, and family worship.”\textsuperscript{42} After expanding on the first two spheres, he presents the definition of family worship.\textsuperscript{43} This final sphere is the focus of the remainder of his work. Throughout the text, Helopoulos provides encouragement as well as examples to show how family worship is possible even in atypical households. His most compelling exhortation comes in his final chapter, which takes on a similar persuasive tone as Whitney’s: “Our families have been starved for a couple of generations now. We have allowed the center of the Christian family to drift, and the church has suffered. Isn’t it time that the evangelical church begins worshiping in the home again?”\textsuperscript{44}

Conclusion. Whitney and Helopoulos both seek the restoration of family worship as a practice that marks Christian homes. The impact of their works is felt already and ideally will proliferate for years to come. Certainly, other practices can mark a home centered on serving Christ; however, family worship has historically and is once again becoming a foundational practice to mark such homes. What is missing in these texts is an explicit call for pastoral visitation to train in these practices. Both men, if writing to an audience of church leaders, would assuredly have practical advice to give. There would be a great benefit from one of these men expanding their works to include the task of the minister. A book in the hand of a parent is good, and a pastor beside them cheering them on is even better.

\textsuperscript{41}Helopoulos, \textit{A Neglected Grace}, 20.

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., 21-22.

\textsuperscript{43}See chap. 1.

\textsuperscript{44}Helopoulos, \textit{A Neglected Grace}, 99.
Practical Training Required

For family worship to manifest in the life of the church, practical training must take place. Practical training will require that the desired task is attainable by laymen after they have been taught, training is reproducible among church leaders and not dependent on a unique gifting or skill set, and both the shepherd and parent are equipped with a quality resource for use in training and family worship.

Attainable by Laymen

Before parents begin learning how to lead family worship they must understand why. Attainability is partially contingent on a desire to learn. As such practical training should leverage convictions to instill interest and commitment. Parents must understand the responsibility and opportunity they have to lead family worship.

Steenburg found a great deal of correlation between attitudes and practices in his surveys. The more a parent agreed they had a responsibility to disciple their children, the more frequently the parents read or discussed the Bible with their children, the more frequently the parent discussed biblical or spiritual matters with their children while engaging in the day-to-day activities, and the more frequently the parents engaged in family devotional or worship times.45

In his well-known work on family worship, Alexander challenges fathers by writing,

Every father of a family should consider himself as charged with the souls of those whom he hopes to leave behind him, and as contributing to the future propagation of the truth, by every act of devotion performed in his house. Wherever he has a tent, God should have an altar. Every professing Christian, who has hitherto lived in neglect of this great duty of a householder, should repent, and humble himself, and establish God’s service at his fireside, before he sleeps another night in a prayer less dwelling.46

Helping Christian parents understand their responsibility to disciple their children in family worship goes a long way to preparing them for training to do so.


46James W. Alexander, Thoughts on Family Worship (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2010), 132.
A parent’s task cannot simply be viewed through the lens of responsibility. When parents clearly see the opportunity that family worship possesses to shape their children they will be much more likely to engage in the practice. Honett says that parents must understand that “family worship is not a simple matter of checking something off their list of things to do in the week to be a good Christian; rather, it is engaging in cosmic battle.” Parents have an opportunity to join with the Spirit in the fight for their children. Beeke paints a picture of the future that should motivate any parent: “Blessed are the parents who can one day see among the crowd of worshipers their own sons and daughters. Family worship is the foundation of such a future.” The ideal future is certainly a motivator. However, parents must understand that the results may not be immediate. Helopoulos gives this encouragement to persevere: “Although the fruit may not be immediately apparent, we can trust that over time God will use the teaching of His Word in the lives of our children, even as He uses it in our own lives.” Parents who understand both their responsibility and opportunity to invest in their children during family worship are much more prepared to begin this endeavor.

Parents must also be capable of the actual leading of family worship. Too often church members are told to emulate ministers but are quickly discouraged because of their lack of training. Most parents in the congregation have not attended seminary. Accordingly, their family worship will not be led by a seminarian. As parents are trained to lead family worship, simplicity must be championed. Bauchham states, “Family worship isn’t a full-on church service every day; instead it’s a brief time of devotion before the Lord. The elements are singing, Scripture reading, and prayer. That’s it!” Some parents may feel

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47 Honett, “Family,” 23.
48 Joel R. Beeke, Family Worship, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2009), 46.
49 Helopoulos, A Neglected Grace, 55.
50 Voddie Baucham, Jr, Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes
foolish at the beginning because even the three primary foci of family worship are foreign to their home. However, if given a simple enough task with sufficient training and a commitment to execution, things will improve. Beeke gives this simple encouragement: “Your skill will increase with practice.” And it truly will.

Finally, parents must count the cost. A decision to lead family worship daily comes at a price. The biggest cost being time. However, as Beeke says, “Time taken from family activity and business to seek God’s blessing is never wasted.” He continues to give a rebuttal to those who would claim to be too busy to worship together: “Family worship should be a non-negotiable event. Business, hobbies, sports, and school activities are secondary to family worship.” Families must consider whether they are willing to structure their days around family worship as Beeke would encourage. To begin without considering the time that family worship will take will most likely lead to failure or at the very least frustration. Other families may struggle because of a child’s lack of willingness to engage. Whitney gives direction to parents who encounter this obstacle:

Your children may or may not be as enthusiastic, but that does not really matter. The less interested they are, the more your family needs family worship. The Lord will help you. He does not call His Spirit-begotten sons to this task without giving them the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish it. The same Father who gave you the Gospel and who drew you to Christ will strengthen you by His Spirit to put on this badge of godly manhood.

There may be obstinacy to overcome. Parents must consider whether it is worth it to enforce mandatory family worship in their home, even with unwilling children.

(Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 79.

51Beeke, Family Worship, 38.

52Ibid., 35.

53Ibid., 36.

54Whitney, Family Worship, 55.
Whitney goes on to challenge parents to forge ahead regardless of the reasons they may have for not leading in family worship:

You are not alone in the circumstances that make family worship difficult. We tend to think that we have unique problems, and our flesh wants to excuse us from family worship on the false grounds that our situation is an exception. We need to accept the fact that in this sinful world, challenges to family worship arise regularly in every home.55

There will be a cost associated with family worship. The costs may vary from home to home. However, parents who are willing to pay the price will see the fruits of their labor over time.

**Reproducible Training Strategy**

A church’s family worship training strategy must be replicable by any qualified church leader regardless of personality and gifting.56 Assuming a qualified team of leaders is available to train parents in the church to lead family worship, two other criteria will aid in the replication of the strategy: clear strategies and appropriate candidates.

First, the strategy must be clear. Training parents to lead family worship need not be a complex ordeal. Though there are varying family dynamics at play in every home, the mechanisms of family worship are identical for every home: read, pray, sing. Accordingly, training in a variety of families should look very similar. The only variation required will be to address the any situational issues that may arise. Though, if confidence and conviction have been instilled in the parent, then the parent will overcome these issues on their own without the need for much coaching on the minute details of their family.

Second, the strategy must target appropriate candidates. Family worship presupposes at least one parent or guardian in the home be a professing believer. Additionally, it will be helpful if these parents have shown some interest in the specific


56In many contexts, an established team of elders minister to the congregation, each elder knowing specifically for which families he is responsible. However, if this is missing, a leadership team should be trained to teach parents to lead family worship.
practice of family worship, or at a minimum expressed a desire to learn more about how to disciple their children. It is not impossible to lead those with no initial desire into the practice of leading family worship. However, local church leaders must first focus on those who express a desire in this area before turning their attention to those that may need more convincing before they receive training.

**Equipped with a Quality Resource**

Finally, ministers and laymen must be equipped with a quality resource for training and leading family worship. Admittedly, this final component is the least valuable. Most families, if they have a quality translation of Scripture and any sort of technology can find what they need to lead family worship. However, in many churches physical resources tend to gain the most attention. Without a curriculum or “official” publication, family worship may not carry weight within the week-to-week foci of the congregation. Additionally, both the minister and the parent will gain confidence in the process if they receive a quality resource. As such, the resource provided should be quality, consistent, and accessible.

Most churches do not have the ability to professionally edit, print, and bind every publication that comes from the office. Still, every church can do their best at producing quality work. Basic editing with a focus on readability and the basic rules of grammar will go a long way in creating a usable piece for church members. Churches that focus on quality work instill confidence in both the minister and the parent involved in the training. The minister feels prepared to put his best foot forward while the parent feels equipped with something of value.

Alongside quality, the resource should focus on being consistent. The depth of theological discourse should be relatively identical throughout each week and even month. Each day should feel like it is a part of the whole week. Other issues to consider are tone, target audience, and word count. These various factors add together to build a sense of
consistency. By providing a resource that feels similar every day, parents gain a comfort level and a feeling of expertise much quicker than if there was a great amount of variance.

Last, the resource must be accessible. Every church has a distribution system for the most important publications, even if it has not explicitly been planned that way. Family worship resources must be easily obtained by ministers who will lead the training as well as parents who will lead their families. In conjunction, family worship resources must be readily promoted in key areas to instill an awareness of these resources and their place in the life of the church. When a church makes family worship resources accessible to everyone, they go a long way in removing potential barriers to participation in the practice.

**Conclusion**

Family worship, led by parents who have been trained through pastoral visitation, has many positive qualities. It enables pastors to take on a part of their shepherding task, which is often neglected even though it holds the opportunity for effectiveness that cannot be matched through other methods. Pastors can bolster their attentiveness to regular visitation by looking to Jesus as the model of what a true shepherd does to care for his sheep. Additionally, this practice enables families to take part in something that unites them with Christians across all Christian history. Baxter, Spurgeon, Whitney, and Helopoulos can all attest to the timeless value of family worship. Finally, pastors who focus on making their training as practical as possible stand the best chance at successfully urging families to endeavor in this neglected grace. This effort will certainly require more work on the front end, but long-term effectiveness will be enabled only if pastors strive for attainable goals, replicable strategy, and applicable resources.
CHAPTER 4
TRAINING PARENTS TO LEAD FAMILY WORSHIP:
THE PREPARATION AND FOLLOW THROUGH

Family worship will be a keystone habit within the homes of families at SOBC. This conviction drove the implementation of this project. From the first day of week 1 until the very end, the desire for families of all types to experience daily the joy of worshipping their creator side-by-side has not waned.

However, desire does not equal change. SOBC has been historically entrenched in a ministry model that takes the responsibility of discipleship out of the hands of parents and places it squarely into the waiting hands of professional ministers. Accordingly, many parents now believe themselves either incapable or to have no obligation to disciple their children. As there is no responsibility to lead their own children into corporate worship, there is no correlating responsibility to lead their children in family worship.

Because of the lack of structural support for parent-led discipleship within SOBC, the home must be reoriented to prioritize the role of the parent as a disciple maker and worship leader. Worship leader in the sense of one who draws others to a posture of worship. Musical ability has no ultimate bearing on the parent who desires to lead family worship. However, to accomplish a task that is foreign, parents must be trained and equipped.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the process used to train parents to lead family worship in their homes. The process had four major phases: an attempt to understand current family discipleship practices and perceptions at SOBC, the development of the family worship guide, an initial period of pastoral visitation, and a

\[\text{For a summary treatment, see chap. 1.}\]
follow up period of pastoral visitation. There was a small degree of overlap within the first three phases which allowed each component to progress faster. This project served as an initial attempt to begin helping families see the joy that exists in a Christ-centered home, as well as to begin painting a picture of what the congregation would be like if every parent took seriously the call they have to disciple their children.

The project itself lasted a total of twenty-one weeks. An extant survey was utilized in addition to several tools that were developed: an eight-week family worship guide, a family worship guide evaluation rubric, a pastoral visitation pre- and post-survey, and a family worship evaluation rubric.

**Assessment of Current Family Discipleship Understanding and Practice**

The initial step in this project was gaining a foundational understanding of the practice and perceptions of family discipleship within the church. Though family discipleship has been a topic within various teaching settings within the church, there had been no prior attempts to assess what the parents actually believe and do.

**Week 1**

The Family Discipleship Practices and Perceptions Survey (FDPPS) was chosen as the initial assessment tool due to its use within churches who currently adopt the Family-Equipping model of family ministry. Some consideration was given to developing a survey from scratch that focused on family worship specifically, however, the broad approach of the FDPPS allowed for a more holistic snapshot of familial faith practices. The survey was taken from its original format and turned into a digital survey.

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2Subheadings showing “Week 1,” “Week 2,” etc., are the same time frame between every phase.

utilizing Google Docs. Additional information was requested at the beginning of the survey to ensure that the respondents fit the criteria of being parents, church attenders, and professing believers.

**Weeks 2 and 3**

Over the course of two weeks, the FDPPS was administered to parents within the congregation. The original plan was to distribute paper copies during the 9:30 a.m. Life Group hour. However, after some discussion with the staff regarding attendance patterns of some families, we decided to use the online format. The FDPPS was sent via email, during week 2, to every parent within the congregation who was connected to a child within the church database. At the beginning of week 3, an announcement was made from the pulpit during worship about the survey and a follow up e-mail was sent that afternoon.

**Week 4**

Following the two weeks of data collection, the results of the survey were analyzed. Responses were given a numeric value from 1 to 6. Mean scores for each question were taken to identify areas in which the congregation were significantly lower than in other categories.

**Week 5**

After looking at the results, it appeared that the Family Worship Guide (FWG) should be altered to include a heavier emphasis on the need for parents to exhibit a conscious commitment to leading family worship on a regular basis. This practice scored

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4 Appendix 1 is identical in wording to what appeared in the digital form.

5 Many of our church families have split custody of their children. This situation apparently results in more infrequent attendance because these families commonly attend only on the Sundays their children are with them.

6 See appendix 5.
the lowest in the survey outside of a concerted effort to evangelize together. Additionally, parents apparently needed an opportunity to discuss how they were to overcome barriers to leading family worship at home. Many families reported having not received any individualized attention from church leadership regarding their child’s discipleship. The low scores regarding pastoral engagement with parents were not reflected in the FWG itself, but rather served to shape conversations with staff as well as reinforce the need for this type of work.

**Development of the Family Worship Guide**

The second step in the project was to develop a Family Worship Guide with which parents could lead family worship in their homes.

**Week 1**

During the first week of implementation the template was developed for each day’s outline in the FWG. This template included a brief introduction to the passage, an assigned passage to read aloud, approximately two discussion questions, a prayer guide, and recommended songs. These components reflect the definition of “family worship” in chapter 1.

Following the template, the physical aspect of the FWG was considered. First, a binder was selected for ease of use. A one-inch mini binder was chosen because it was easier to handle and stores more similarly to a bible than a full-size binder. Accordingly, the guide was formatted to print on 5.5”x8.5” paper with hole punches in the left-hand margin. In addition, introductory material was written to provide parents with a basic understanding of family worship and a few pieces of advice. The material also served as a basic outline for the initial pastoral visit.

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7 See appendix 6 for final version of “FWG Front Matter.”
Next, passages were chosen for each week of the guide. After considering the church’s emphasis on the Sunday morning worship service, it was decided to coordinate passage selection with the preaching emphasis of the week. This area of focus was deemed the best way to create initial interest from the congregation at large.

**Week 2-4**

During week 2 of the project, the first three weeks of the FWG were written. This writing included the selection of songs as well as the development of the Spotify playlists. In week 3, a slight change was made to the original plan. Initially, the FWG would contain thirteen weeks of material; however, after discussing the sermon calendar with the senior pastor, the decision was made to alter the content to only incorporate the eight weeks in which pastoral visitation would occur. A new sermon series was set to begin at week 9 of the guide. Following this change, weeks 4 through 6 were written. In week 4 of the project, weeks 7 and 8 of the FWG were written. Additionally, the cover art was created for the binder. This artwork was printed on cardstock and inserted into the front, spine, and back of the binder.

**Week 5**

In this week, the introductory material in the FWG was altered to include a special emphasis on ways to help parents prioritize family worship. Furthermore, a place at the beginning of each week was added to encourage families to document their intended times of family worship for the week.

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8See appendix 7 for the passages that were selected.

9See appendix 7 for the full eight weeks.

10Revisions based on the FDPPS results.
Week 6

After the revisions were made and the FWG document was edited, the FWG was printed, bound, and mailed to the expert panel along with the evaluation rubric.

Weeks 7-10

Over the span of a few days, responses came in from all three members of the expert panel. A “2” rating, “requires attention,” was given in two separate categories from one panel member. Because the questions where I received a “2” averaged a “3” when all panel members were considered, no changes were submitted. However, the specific feedback from this member was taken into consideration.

During week 9, slight alterations to the FWG were made. To address “biblical and theological soundness,” the introductory material was expanded to include all the passages focused on in chapter 2. The initial guide only focused on the Deuteronomy passage. To address “aesthetic appeal,” a few changes were made to the cover art. Making changes in the body of the FWG to add more color was found to be cost-prohibitive and therefore not addressed.

In week 10, the FWG was printed, bound, and prepared for SOBC families. The introductory material was placed inside the binder, while the material to be used during family worship was printed, punched, and placed inside an envelope, which was placed inside the binder. The thought was to have parents open an eight-week guide and place it in the binder in order to teach them how to use the refill packs that would be made available every eight to thirteen weeks.

Pastoral Visitation

The third step in the project was pastoral visitation, which spanned weeks 7-15. The true emotional energy was spent during this time. It was also the most rewarding

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11See appendix 7 for panel responses.
time spent. There was no way to anticipate the joy that would be experienced in meeting with families.

**Weeks 7-8**

In weeks 7-8, a pastoral visitation pre-survey (PVS) was sent to specific families. These families had responded to the FDPPS and indicated that they were interested in learning more. Families received a phone call to let them know that the survey was coming. Following the call, which also served to confirm an email address, a link for the survey was e-mailed to the parents. Parents in the same home were asked to take the survey together, providing one combined response per household. Over these two weeks, confirmation was obtained in person that the survey had been completed.

**Weeks 9-10**

Weeks 9-10 consisted of scheduling pastoral visits. Online software was used to show availability to parents. Every person who finished the PVS pre-survey received an email invitation for a pastoral visit. Parents were asked to respond by requesting up to three meeting times for an initial visit.

There was a great deal of intentionality to communicate to parents that the availability was a true representation of when the pastor was willing and able to come to their homes. There was a general concern for the pastor’s time expressed by most parents, which meant that they were typically unwilling to request a meeting time that seemed inconvenient. However, after multiple assurances, visits were scheduled. A couple of ministers on staff expressed interest in tagging along on some of these visits. However, as requests came in, their availability did not line up with what was being scheduled.

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12 The survey was developed prior to the implementation stage of the project. See appendix 3.

13 I chose to the software “Meet Me,” through www.doodle.com. It is free and user friendly.
**Week 11**

During week 11, the FWG was distributed to all fourteen families who had agreed to participate and schedule a pastoral visit. Some guides were given out at “Information Central,” a permanent fixture in the church fellowship hall that contains static resources and registration forms. Other guides were hand-delivered to parents in their Life Groups. Two guides were sent by mail, due to the family’s travel schedule. Each guide consisted of the binder, introductory material, and the envelope containing the first eight weeks of worship material.

**Weeks 12-15**

Over the course of weeks 12-15, fourteen initial pastoral visits were made. Each family received a phone call the day before to confirm time and location. Most of the visits occurred in the church member’s home. Generally, there was a sense of welcome in every home that was visited. Though most meetings occurred in homes, one meeting took place in the church office, and a couple at a local coffee shop.

At the beginning of the visit, I expressed gratitude for the opportunity to make the visit. Quite a few times parents expressed, “we can’t believe you’re spending this amount of time with just us,” or something similar. There was a general sense of appreciation for a minister to give devoted attention to a family individually. To maintain their gratitude, commitment was shown to the one-hour time slot they had given with a consistent effort not to go over time. In most of the homes, however, going over time would not have seemed unnatural or unwelcome. Even with the littlest children, chaos was present, but not frustration due to length of time.

During the first visit, children were not included. The purpose was to speak to parents and then let them take the lead with their children. Children generally stayed in their rooms or were gone to various events like practice for a sporting event. In homes with younger children, many parents scheduled the visit after bedtime.
While walking through the family worship guide with the parents it appeared that many had a general unfamiliarity with the practice, though, not the concept of family worship. What was discussed seemed to make sense, but the way to “pull it off” in their home seemed to be the biggest concern—this was not a minor issue. Each home posed unique challenges because of the great diversity of homes represented. Children ranged from one year old to eighteen. There were a variety of family dynamics with biological parents, step-parents, single parents and one with grandparents in the home. An initial amount of surprise was experienced at the level of relational disconnect in some homes. It seemed like some families were content, or at least had surrendered to the idea, that their family would simply live separate lives. In homes with older children and teens, it was common to experience parental buy-in with very little concept of how they could ever get their children to participate. Throughout every visit, a tone of encouragement was maintained from start to finish.

At the conclusion of the visit, families were asked to schedule a follow up visit. The original plan was to line up the visit exactly four weeks out to keep things consistent. This happened in some cases, but in most cases, it did not. However, most parents ensured they would have a minimum of two weeks’ experience leading family worship before the next visit. This was accomplished in all but one home. Because the initial visit was accomplished while sitting face-to-face, many visits were scheduled right then. A few families scheduled electronically again at some point in the following weeks.

**Pastoral Evaluation**

Having wished each family well on their initial journey toward leading family worship, I began getting responses about follow up visits. Most follow-up visits were scheduled by the end of week 15. A handful were scheduled during week 16. The follow-
up visits included an observation of family worship in the home as well as the utilization of the Family Worship Leadership Evaluation Rubric.¹⁴

**Weeks 16-19**

These four weeks were the most fulfilling of the project. During this time, fourteen follow-up visits were made to families where parents had been trained on how to lead family worship.

Each visit flowed about the same way. After a brief welcome, parents were asked how things were going with family worship. Next, parents were encouraged to gather the family so family worship could be experienced with them. Typically, the pastor would say something like, “I will be here, but simply as an observer, don’t feel like you need to include me. I will follow your lead.” At this point, parents would lead family worship. For many homes, the visit was outside of their routine. It was common to hear parents, especially with pre-school aged children, say they had led family worship already that morning. In turn, their second attempt at that session was observed. Many parents seemed leery of being observed and evaluated. Accordingly, they were consistently reassured that they were not getting a grade. They were, however, providing the pastor an opportunity to help their family and other families. After family worship, parents and children were encouraged, asked if they needed anything, and handed the next FWG pack. This FWG refill pack was not to be utilized during the project, but as a continuation of SOBC ministry efforts. Parents were then informed about the post-survey coming their way and asked them to participate in it.

During each visit, parents gave an assortment of comments about songs, length of passages, and discussion questions. Though not documented in the project, this feedback

¹⁴This rubric was developed during the initial stages of the project, well before project implementation occurred. See appendix 4.
provided good insight for future efforts at SOBC. Overall, these visits were a bit shorter than the initial visits and contained an abundance of encouragement.

Following the visit, the evaluation rubric was immediately filled out in the car by the visiting pastor. This allowed the collection of an accurate report without the passage of too much time. Additionally, parents were also sent the post-visit survey at this time. Parents were asked to fill out the survey together, submitting one per household.

**Week 20**

During week 20, the remaining post-visit surveys were sent to parents who indicated that they had not filled one out.

**Week 21**

In the final week of the project, survey data was evaluated to determine that there was a statistically significant difference ($t(26)=1.72, p=.0484$) in competency to lead family worship as self-reported by parents who participated in the pastoral visitation. The original plan was to compare scores using a paired $t$-test; however, a few parents forgot their “unique identifying number.” Because of this, parents were compared using an unpaired, one-tailed, $t$-test.

**Conclusion**

The implementation phase of the project was challenging but encouraging. Many families appeared to exhibit a great deal of joy during worship. Still, for others, it seems like the practice will fade away without a concerted effort. Continuous exhortation will need to be given to all families involved to ensure that the practice continues.

The feedback from the expert panel as well as church members was incredibly valuable in shaping the FWG that will continue to be given to parents. Alterations will continue to be made over time to produce a guide that fits our congregation.

Though there was little staff participation during this initial run, my hope is that leaders within the congregation will begin taking on a collective charge for training
even more parents in this practice. After almost half of a year committed to beginning this practice in this congregation, the future looks bright for the homes that have started to lead their families in regular family worship. I pray that over time this practice becomes ingrained into the “DNA” of parents at Shady Oaks Baptist Church.
CHAPTER 5
EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The evaluation of this project incorporates an examination of the project’s purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. This chapter also includes recommended adjustments to the project that might increase its efficacy. Finally, a space for theological and personal reflection conclude the evaluation.

Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train the parents of Shady Oaks Baptist Church, Hurst, Texas, to lead family worship in their homes. This purpose was chosen after considering the unique situation in which SOBC finds itself. Two main areas show how SOBC is not living up to its mission to “make disciples one family at a time.” First, despite a multiplicity of generations within the congregation, there is a noticeable generational divide on Sunday mornings. Parents can conceivably come to church with their family during the entirety of their child’s upbringing without ever worshipping side-by-side. This divide exists in practically every other area of ministry programming. Second, discipleship strategies for the individual family are absent even with an impressive ratio of leaders to lay people. Ideally, more leaders would lend itself toward a more customized approach to shepherding families.

Family worship was selected as a way to begin a conversation about family discipleship from which other practices can be launched. Admittedly, several other options exist as to how to begin tackling the issue of family discipleship. However, this practice, coupled with pastoral visitation as the method of instruction, appeared to be a prime candidate for creating immediate and lasting change within the church family.
In short, the purpose was accomplished. Fourteen homes were directly impacted by parents being trained to lead family worship. However, there is work still to be done. These parents have been trained, but continuation of the practice is not ensured. Like in any practice, intrinsic motivation must be maintained to continue effort. An explanation of the goals gives greater insight as to the degree of success experienced in the central purpose of training parents to lead family worship.

**Evaluation of the Project’s Goals**

Four goals were created to ensure successful completion of the project. Each goal worked in succession to bring the training of parents to lead family worship to fruition. A full examination of each goal reveals successes and where there was room for growth.

**Goal 1**

The first goal was to assess the understanding of home-based family discipleship among families with children residing in the home who are active members of SOBC. This goal was completed by sending parents the FDPPS and evaluating the results. ¹ For this goal to be considered successfully met, thirty-five parents from SOBC needed to respond and the ensuing results be analyzed for themes that impact the remainder of the project.

The survey itself is a quality tool. It is concise and easy for parents to respond to. There was no sense given from any respondent that the survey was overly intrusive or time-consuming. Following distribution of the survey, there were thirty-four unique respondents. This fell goal short of the desired goal of thirty-five respondents, representing roughly half of the parents within the congregation. Multiple attempts were made to gain more responses, but they did not come in a timely manner. In turn, the thirty-four responses were deemed adequate and analysis ensued.

¹See appendix 5 for full results.
Two main themes materialized from the responses. First, parents appeared to understand that it is their responsibility to disciple their children. Statement 6, which reads, “Parents—and particularly fathers—have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children,” strongly displayed this understanding by receiving an average response of 5.44. Second, parents did not recall a good deal of interaction with church leadership regarding their children’s spiritual development. Respondents gave an average score of 2.71 to statement 16, indicating low levels of engagement from church leaders. Several parents, thirteen of the thirty-four, indicated that no leader had contacted them in the past year to discuss their child’s spiritual growth.

These results displayed a group of parents who already believe that they have a significant responsibility to disciple their children. Additionally, with the level of attention they said they were receiving from church leadership, it appeared that there would be a great deal of openness to hearing from leaders. At the very least, it as if they felt they were hearing from church leaders too often already.

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop a weekly family worship guide to give to parents every Sunday for the following week’s family worship. To accomplish this goal, a basic format was decided upon for each day in the FWG. An accompanying section of introductory material was provided to help parents begin thinking about how and why to lead family worship. Passages were selected for each day of the eight-week guide that incorporated the focus of the preceding Sunday’s sermon. The full guide was written and then submitted to an expert panel for their evaluation. The panel consisted of a SBTS professor who has published work on the subject of family worship, a minister who is also published on the subject of family worship, and the founder of a well-known youth ministry curriculum company. These three experts provided great feedback.

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2The result of 5.44 rests in between “agree” and “strongly agree.”
To be considered successful, a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion had to meet or exceed the “sufficient” level within the evaluation rubric. Of the thirty-nine possible responses from the three panel members, two resulted in less than a “sufficient” rating. However, as noted, the average responses from the panel on these two questions still achieved the “sufficient” rating. The second component to be considered successful was a documented plan for the development of the resource following the project’s completion. This plan is currently in place. Following the eight-week implementation period, passages for future guides have been altered to follow the church’s year-long reading plan rather than the preaching calendar. Passages that are too long for use in family worship will be reduced to retain key principles, but allow for a family to use them within the allotted time.

Revisions to the guide were made, as discussed previously, and the guide was distributed to families. The guides received a positive response overall from parents. The tangible resource appeared to legitimize the visitation efforts that would ensue. Goal 2 was considered met.

Goal 3

The third goal was to equip parents of SOBC by means of pastoral visitation to lead family worship while using the family worship guide. This goal was measured by a Pastoral Visitation Survey administered before the first visit and again after the second visit. The survey was written to measure the parents’ level of confidence, motivation, and knowledge with respect to leading family worship.

To accomplish this goal, pastoral visitation occurred to train parents how to lead family worship while utilizing the FWG. The pre- and post-survey was distributed and returned electronically. Results were tallied and an unpaired, one-tailed, t-test was run in order to test for significance. Survey data was evaluated to determine that there

3See appendix 9.
was a statistically significant difference ($t(26)=1.72, p=.0484$) in competency to lead family worship as self-reported by parents who participated in the pastoral visitation.

Not every parent experienced growth in every area; however, parents self-reported growth in each of the three categories. The cumulative score of each respondent is listed below in ascending value. With eighteen statements and responses weighted “1” to “6,” scores had a possible range of 18 to 108.\(^4\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Survey</th>
<th>Post-Survey</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>76</td>
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<td>74</td>
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<td>90</td>
<td>94</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Goal 4**

The fourth goal was to evaluate the practice of family worship in the home to ensure competency in leadership has been established. Immediately following the second pastoral visit, where parents led their family in family worship, I filled out an evaluation rubric to assess the leadership of parents in each home. Table 2 displays the total tallied results from the evaluations. Each criterion has a total of fourteen points, one for each home that was visited. The criteria was rated on the following scale: 1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary.

\(^4\)A higher score reflects a more positive response.
Table 2. Pastoral visitation results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent exhibits confidence in leading family worship.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family worship appears to be a joyous experience for the family.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent was proficient in utilizing the Family Worship Guide.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent indicated that family worship was occurring regularly in their</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family worship was attended by the whole family.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The entire family was attentive and participatory while Scripture was</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read and discussed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The entire family was reverent during a time of prayer.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The entire family was involved during a time of musical worship.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent ended family worship after an appropriate amount of time.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goal 4 was considered successfully met because at least 80 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level. Approximately 93 percent of the responses met or exceeded the sufficiency level. Though the goal was successfully met, that does not mean there is no room for improvement. Deficiencies were present in every home. Additional notes taken after each visit served to further the observations that will impact future training.

**Strengths of the Project**

Overall, the project was a success, largely due to the multiple strengths of this project.

First, the concepts and practices presented in the FWG were attainable for most parents without any problem. I had to spend very little time discussing anything due to confusion. In the follow-up visit, parents expressed how convenient it was to use the guide. In summary, this project hit the mark on being attainable for parents.

An additional strength was the method of instruction, the pastoral visitation. This method of instruction enabled conversations to go deep and ensured a level of comprehension for each individual that other methods simply could not. The increases shown in the post-survey are more of a reflection of method of instruction than skill of the instructor. Moreover, this method communicated a significantly higher level of “weightiness” to the importance of what was being communicated. The content was not
simply information at a parent meeting, it was the rationale and methodology for a significant change in the home. Visitation prevented the message from becoming “white noise.” Of all the benefits, the initiation of pastoral visitation may bear the most fruit in my ministry to these families.

**Weaknesses of the Project**

Although there were strengths, there were certainly some weak spots in this project. Some of these were avoidable. Other weaknesses were present due to the nature of the project. There will be challenges in any task.

The biggest weak spot is the project’s lack of scale. The method of instruction, visitation, coupled with a solo approach meant that there were homes that could not be reached during the prescribed time frame. When the visitation was over, I had a long list of families that I still need to visit.

Next, the emphasis of this project may not be sustainable over the long-term. Family worship is not a staff-wide value at this point. As stated throughout this work, family worship runs counter-cultural to what SOBC experiences in the arena of family discipleship. I am consciously working in front of the church’s philosophy to move it forward in how it views family worship. However, without a concerted effort to maintain attention to parents who have begun and to train new parents, the natural pull of our church culture may snuff this practice out.

Finally, the practice of family worship was foreign to these families, which implies modeling should have occurred in the initial visit. Many parents have never experienced family worship, so they thought they might be doing it wrong in the time between the two visits.

**What I Would Do Differently**

After twenty-one weeks of implementation, it is tiring to even think about doing it all over again. But, if I did, I would certainly do some things differently. For the
sake of clarity, I have broken this section down into four parts, the church, the guide, the visits, and the project.

**The Church**

First, I would obtain pastoral support from the pulpit, not just in the office. My pastor checked in several times to see how the training was going. This was encouraging, however, the communication barriers I faced in trying to get the initial invitation across to church members could have been drastically reduced if this was given some time in the church worship services. If I were to do this project again, I would be more intentional about getting my pastor to speak regularly about family worship during the first few weeks. The congregation needs to hear from him for them to value something.

I also might consider focusing on parents of particular aged children. Engaging all parents at once created quite a few different experiences. While I am glad to have had the variety of homes represented, it was hard to get in a groove. Going from a home with teenagers to a home with a lone preschooler created a disconnect. Visiting homes that are more homogenous would allow for advice to crossover more readily.

Finally, I would love to have incorporated a team for the development of the guide and visitation. Though this would have been a great challenge to accomplish in the same time-frame. The biggest reason is the lack of any other family worship regularly occurring amidst our church leader’s homes. However, in the years to come, I hope a team can be developed to continue meeting with parents who are interested in beginning this practice in their homes.

**The Guide**

To improve the FWG, I would first change to a sequential approach for biblical texts. This change is already in place in the third set of FWG refills. My pastor and I work better together when we are not attempting to coordinate his sermon passages with FWG passages eight to thirteen weeks in advance. This change gives me the ability to work
ahead on writing while not creating unnecessary restrictions on his preaching calendar. A sequential approach also gives parents the ability to help their children see the value in walking through a text. Coordination with the yearly reading plan for the church also helps create simplicity in what we ask our families to focus on.

Next, I would minimize song selection. This is another change that has been put in place. Parents need familiarity in their songs. Five songs a week is too many. It was ambitious, but misguided. Parents consistently expressed that this was the least used part of the guide due to the inability to learn multiple songs a week. Over time, it will be possible to add more songs, but initially a significantly reduced number is needed.

Finally, I need to produce the guide in multiple formats. It is now relatively easy to take a document and export it in a variety of formats. Several families preferred electronic copies of the guide. However, I only offered it in one electronic format. Apps, eBooks, and webpages are all being considered as potential platforms for the FWG in the future.

The Visits

To improve the visitation process, it would have been better to start visits before the project. Incorporating this training into routine pastoral visits would seemingly have a higher level of acceptance because there would already be an established relational dynamic. I found myself explaining the visitation aspect of the project far too often.

I also need to figure out the single mom dynamic. I will not meet a single mom at her home by myself. As a result, these parents had to leave their homes to meet with me. Maybe Starbucks and the office are the best place. However, it would be best to scout out some “home-turf” feeling locations to recommend where we can actually meet and discuss. Too often, the coffee shop meetings were interrupted. It was also strange to experience family worship in my office.

Additionally, I should think of a way to include my wife during some of the visits, which could have solved the problem of the single moms. That would not have
been the only benefit as my wife helps lead family worship in our home on a regular basis. She has a personality that our church connects with and many parents would have benefited from her personal testimony about leading our own children in worship.

Finally, I should have brought cookies to the follow up visit. Cookies in this instance are purely symbolic. I ought to have been better about creating excitement and joy with the children who were present. I was asking a lot from these families compared to what they have experienced in the past. Parents were given a resource in the first visit, and I should have brought something for the kids in the second visit. It is always good to bring something of value to those with whom I want to speak.

**Project Methodology**

The initial assessment using the FDPPS was distant feeling compared to the heart of the process. If I were to do this project again, I would create some way to be face-to-face with those that I want to take the assessment rather than sending it out electronically. There was too much time behind a computer screen before speaking to one another. In a setting where consistent pastoral visitation occurs, or the minister has established relationships with the entirety of those he wishes to train, this might not be an issue. It simply felt too clinical for our church.

Also, I should have created a better system for maintaining anonymity while preserving a unique identifier for each parent who took the survey. I had hoped to run a paired t-test, but a failure in the survey process eliminated that option.

There are minor changes I would like to make to this project to increase its efficacy. However, I would not change the heart of the project. The utilization of pastoral visitation to train parents to lead family worship was a valuable endeavor within our congregation.
Theological Reflections

During this process and afterwards I had the opportunity to reflect on what I learned along the way. These items listed here are reflections, not necessarily revelations. Very little during these twenty-one weeks was new to me. However, a great deal was reinforced.

The first reality is that true worship is joyous and it is natural for the believer. I spent four weeks observing others worshiping their savior. In doing so, I saw dozens of people emit joy while taking part. There were moments where family members sat side-by-side reading the Word, bowing in prayer, or singing praises, that appeared completely normal. This is how it should be. There is nothing more natural for a child of God than joining others in worship.

Next, the Spirit is present when people are gathered in Jesus’ name. Family worship is a supernatural activity. God is faithful to be present when families turn their hearts’ attention to Him.

Also, under-shepherds must strive to make their voice known. Pastors must care for the flock that has been entrusted to us. One way they do this is to provide loving instruction. This process of visiting has helped establish a voice that no sermon or parent meeting ever has.

Finally, the ability to lead a family is truly a reflection of spiritual maturity. This ability requires equal parts competency and willingness. Most parents possess competency because they have been given the Spirit. Willingness to follow through on what God is calling a parent to do, regardless of cost, is one of the most consistent tests of maturity.

Personal Reflections

I also learned a great deal about myself during this process. I have grown as a believer, as a father and husband, and as a minister during this time. These twenty-one weeks have been catalytic in my personal development in the following ways.
Committing to make personal visits pushed me into a pastoral posture. This reorientation will certainly enable pastoral care to continue and expand with these families. A degree of pastoral credibility was gained in the eyes of each of these families because of my willingness to spend time in their homes. Certainly, for some families it was the first time they had received this type of pastoral attention. I have learned that I need to make the commitment to do what is right and then my actions will follow.

The second thing I learned about my own ministry is that time is available for visitation if it is given priority. The thought of visiting so many homes seemed daunting prior to this project. In fact, several individuals around me viewed the strategy as unrealistic and even irresponsible. Some leaders held a belief that it was not possible to meet individually with that many people. Others felt as if time outside of the office should be focused on larger gatherings, such as school lunches, athletic events, or general community involvement. There are barriers to meeting with families one-on-one, however, intentionality enables regular visitation.

As a believer, I need to benefit from the Lord speaking through other believers on a regular basis. I left those second visits so blessed to hear other believers speak God’s truth. Believers of all ages and situations can edify any other Christian. I should seek out these opportunities routinely.

Finally, I want to be a dad and husband who leads my family well. Family worship is one component of this. As visits continued, I had the opportunity to talk about my wife and kids many times. Seemingly, every time I spoke about how I led our home spiritually further solidified my conviction to continue doing so. King Jesus is worthy of worship and I could have no greater honor than showing my wife and our children how to bow in honor of Him, every single day.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this project was to train the parents of Shady Oaks Baptist Church, Hurst, Texas, to lead family worship in their homes. The purpose was
accomplished through the successful completion of the four primary goals.

In chapter 1, the context of ministry at SOBC highlighted a generational divide present in the congregation. Additionally, very few efforts are in place to minister to families individually, despite the church’s mission statement to do just that. Instruction in family worship was proposed as one way to minimize the divide while focusing on the specific needs of individual families. Chapter 2 established a biblical basis for parent-led family worship to occur in every home. Following this, chapter 3 highlighted pastoral visitation as a reasonable method of instruction to train parents how to lead family worship. Chapter 4 provided an overview of the twenty-one-week process for developing the material that families would use in family worship as well as the training that took place. Chapter 5 contained an evaluation and reflection about the project overall.

This project was successful in training parents to lead family worship within fourteen homes at SOBC. Additionally, these efforts will shape future ministry to SOBC families. First, effort will be given to the continuation of the FWG. Providing a tool for families to use on a regular basis takes work, but is of great value. Second, there is a heightened emphasis on pastoral visitation and individual care that should be paid to every church family. Other ministers have begun the process of making regular pastoral visits. Finally, our leadership team is beginning to observe a shift in thinking within our congregation where more parents want to incorporate their children into the life of the church. I pray that parents will strive to continue leading worship in their homes so that every child from our church grows up worshiping their creator side-by-side with their parents.
APPENDIX 1

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES SURVEY (FDPPS)

The following survey\(^1\) was slightly amended to include information about SOBC and distributed to parents who attend a Sunday morning Bible study at SOBC and have children living in the home. The aim was to determine their current perception and practices of family discipleship. Surveys were distributed during the Sunday morning Bible study hour in their classrooms.

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess the current understanding of family discipleship at Shady Oaks. Michael Sawyer is conducting this survey for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

[  ] I agree to participate
[  ] I do not agree to participate

Section 1
The first section of the survey will obtain some demographic information about the individuals taking this survey.

Directions: Answer the following questions by filling in the blank space provided.

1. What is your current age? ______

2. Would you call yourself a Christian?
   ___ A. Yes
   ___ B. No

3. How long have you attended Shady Oaks? ______

4. Do you have any children age 18 or younger living in the home?
   ___ A. Yes
   ___ B. No

5. How many Sundays a month do you attend or serve in Sunday morning Bible study at SOBC?
   ___ A. 0-1
   ___ B. 1-2
   ___ C. 2-3
   ___ D. 3-4
   ___ E. 4-5
Section 2
The second section of the FDPPS will focus on eight parental perception and eight parental practice questions. These questions are identical to the questions Dr. Timothy Paul Jones presents in “Family Ministry Field Guide.”

Directions: This survey is intended for parents with children living at home. For the purposes of this survey, “church leaders” include pastors, elders, ministers, deacons, teachers, or small-group leaders. Please mark one box per question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1: Parental Perceptions</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family’s schedule.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>03. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>04. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>05. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together.</td>
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<tr>
<td>06. Parents—and particularly fathers—have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>07. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>08. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child’s spiritual growth.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Part 2: Parental Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Once</th>
<th>A couple times</th>
<th>Three or four times</th>
<th>Five or six times</th>
<th>Seven or more times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past WEEK have I prayed aloud with any of my children?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How many times in the past WEEK has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. How many times in the past MONTH have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. How many times in the past MONTH have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How many times in the past TWO MONTHS has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How many times in the past TWO MONTHS have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children’s spiritual development?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. How many times in the past YEAR have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. How many times in the past YEAR has any church leader made contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child’s spiritual development?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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APPENDIX 2

FAMILY WORSHIP GUIDE EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following rubric was sent to three family worship experts in order to evaluate the Family Worship Guide for quality content and functionality. Experts who are both published for their work on family worship and serving in ministry were prioritized.
### Family Worship Guide (FWG) Evaluation Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Panel Member: __________</th>
<th>Date: ______</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1= insufficient  2= requires attention  3= sufficient  4= exemplary

#### Content

| The material is biblically and theologically sound. |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|

| The FWG focuses on all essential components for family worship. |  |  |  |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|

| Amount of material provided for each component is sufficient enough to lead quality family worship. |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|

| The material provides an appropriate starting point for family worship. |  |  |  |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|

| The FWG provides appropriate methods of application for the family. |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|

| The FWG maintains doctrinal clarity while remaining accessible to parents of all intellects. |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|

| The recommended sources for families who want to go deeper are of a high quality. |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|

#### Functionality

| The FWG is intuitive to use. |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|

| The FWG provides clear direction for obtaining and using sources not provided directly to parents. |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|

| Recommendations for parents with children of different ages are clear and helpful. |  |  |  |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|

| The FWG is aesthetically appealing. |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|

| The FWG is an appropriate size for storage and regular use. |  |  |  |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|

Please include any other comments regarding the Family Worship Guide below:
APPENDIX 3
PASTORAL VISITATION SURVEY

The following survey was administered as a pre-survey and post-survey. The pre-survey was administered prior to the first pastoral visit in which parents were trained to lead family worship. Surveys were sent digitally, as well as in a hard copy invitation to participate through the mail, to parents who are members of SOBC and also have children residing in their home. Following the pre-survey, two pastoral visits were scheduled. After the second pastoral visit, an identical post-survey was administered.

---

1“Children” includes everyone from birth through high school. These children are ministered to in the preschool, children, and student ministries.
PASTORAL VISITATION SURVEY

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess the current understanding of family worship in the home Shady Oaks church members. Michael Sawyer is conducting this survey for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

In order to ensure clear results, families need to be available for two, one-hour, pastoral visits during the two months in which the project is being implemented.

By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

[ ] I agree to participate personal ID#______ (4 digit number that you will remember)
[ ] I do not agree to participate

Section 1
The first section of the survey will obtain some demographic information about the individuals taking this survey. If a subject answers that they do not have children, would not self-identify as a Christian, or that they attend 0-1 times a month, their answers will not be counted in the t-test.

Directions: Answer the following questions by filling in the blank space provided.

1. What is your current age? ______

2. Would you call yourself a Christian?
   ___ A. Yes
   ___ B. No

3. How long have you attended Shady Oaks? ______

4. Do you have any children age 18 or younger living in the home?
   ___ A. Yes
   ___ B. No

5. How many Sundays a month do you attend or serve in Sunday morning Bible study at SOBC?
   ___ A. 0-1
   ___ B. 1-2
   ___ C. 2-3
   ___ D. 3-4
   ___ E. 4-5
Section 2
The second section of the survey will create the data that is used in the t-test to evaluate whether a significant difference was made through pastoral visitation. Questions 1-6 will measure a parent’s confidence to lead family worship. Questions 7-12 will measure a parent’s motivation for leading family worship. Questions 13-18 will measure a parent’s knowledge of the basics of family worship. Questions will be randomly ordered when the surveys are distributed.

Directions: Select one of the following responses for each statement below: SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, DS=Disagree Somewhat, AS=Agree Somewhat, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree

5. I feel like I have all the tools I need to lead my family in family worship.
   SD  D  DS  AS  A  SA

6. I feel like I am personally capable of leading my family in family worship.
   SD  D  DS  AS  A  SA

7. I feel like my family can make family worship a regular practice in our home.
   SD  D  DS  AS  A  SA

8. I feel like my kids are open to the idea of family worship.
   SD  D  DS  AS  A  SA

9. I feel like my family getting better in how we are doing family worship.
   SD  D  DS  AS  A  SA

10. I feel like I am doing a good job of leading my family spiritually.
    SD  D  DS  AS  A  SA

11. I believe my spiritual leadership will produce a spiritual legacy in my children.
    SD  D  DS  AS  A  SA

12. I believe I have a responsibility to lead my family in daily family worship.
    SD  D  DS  AS  A  SA

13. I believe daily family worship will help my family grow closer to God.
    SD  D  DS  AS  A  SA

14. I believe family worship will help my family grow closer to each other.
    SD  D  DS  AS  A  SA

15. I believe that God wants us to have family worship every day.
    SD  D  DS  AS  A  SA

16. I believe daily family worship will improve my marriage.
    SD  D  DS  AS  A  SA
17. I can identify and describe the three basic elements of family worship.
   SD D DS AS A SA

18. I know how to lead a 15-minute family worship time for my family.
   SD D DS AS A SA

19. I can identify the three spheres of worship for a believer.
   SD D DS AS A SA

20. I know how to lead my family in a time of musical worship.
    SD D DS AS A SA

21. I know the basics of how to teach Scripture to my children.
    SD D DS AS A SA

22. I know how to lead a prayer for and with my family.
    SD D DS AS A SA
APPENDIX 4

FAMILY WORSHIP LEADERSHIP
EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following Family Worship Leadership Rubric was utilized to evaluate the effort that was made to equip parents to lead family worship in their homes. Immediately following a second pastoral visit in which the pastor observed family worship in the home, the rubric was filled out to evaluate the parents’ level of competency in leading family worship.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent exhibits confidence in leading family worship.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family worship appears to be a joyous experience for the family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent was proficient in utilizing the Family Worship Guide.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent indicated that family worship was occurring regularly in their home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family worship was attended by the whole family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The entire family was attentive and participatory while Scripture was read and discussed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The entire family was reverent during a time of prayer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The entire family was involved during a time of musical worship.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent ended family worship after an appropriate amount of time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 5
FDPPS RESULTS

The following tables display the mean responses from the FDPPS. There were thirty-four respondents in total. All respondents met the appropriate criteria.
FDPPS RESULTS

Table A1. FDDPS results for part 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01. I prioritize consistent family devotional or worship times in my family’s schedule.</td>
<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02. I would like to do regular family devotions or Bible reading in our home, but my family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while.</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching.</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04. When my child spontaneously asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me.</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05. I want to do whatever it takes for my child to succeed in certain sports or school activities—even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together.</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06. Parents—and particularly fathers—have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children.</td>
<td>5.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others.</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08. My church has helped me to develop a clear plan for my child’s spiritual growth.</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A2. FDDPS results for part 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09. Other than mealtimes, how many times in the past WEEK have I prayed aloud with any of my children?</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How many times in the past WEEK has my family eaten a meal together with television, music, and other similar media turned off?</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. How many times in the past MONTH have I read or discussed the Bible with any of my children?</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. How many times in the past MONTH have I discussed any biblical or spiritual matters with any of my children while engaging in day-to-day activities?</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How many times in the past TWO MONTHS has my family engaged in any family devotional or worship time in our home?</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How many times in the past TWO MONTHS have I talked with my spouse or with a close friend about my children’s spiritual development?</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. How many times in the past YEAR have I intentionally participated with one or more of my children in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. How many times in the past YEAR has any church leader made contact with me to help me to engage actively in my child’s spiritual development?</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 6

FAMILY WORSHIP GUIDE “FRONT MATTER”

The following material compromises the “front matter” in every Family Worship Guide.
Family Worship Guide

Shady Oaks Baptist Church
Hurst, TX

This Family Worship Guide belongs to:___________________
Hello Shady Oaks Family,

The following worship guide is provided for use in your home. I pray that you find the following materials beneficial as you strive to make your home a place that seeks to honor the Lord.

You may be new to the concept of “Family Worship,” so in these opening pages we’ll cover a few basics.

**What exactly is Family Worship?**

“Family worship is that sphere of worship which incorporates those living under the same roof in a time of worship together” (Jason Helopolous in *A Neglected Grace: Family Worship in the Christian Home*).

We want you to worship with your family every day. Nothing is more in line with what you were created for than worship.

We want to encourage you in three main components of worship:

1. Scripture reading with discussion
2. Prayer
3. Singing

**Why Family Worship?**

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 shows clearly that God desires the home to be a hub of theological reflection. Quite simply, our homes should be filled with the praise and worship of our creator.

Specifically verses seven through nine emphasize that teaching our children to worship the Lord should be an all-encompassing endeavor.

Family Worship is a wonderful practice that enables us to worship King Jesus alongside the rest of our family.

Ephesians 6:1-4 displays the relationship that children and parents should have. Children are to honor and obey their parents. Parents are to strive to maintain the relationship with their children and
instruct them in such a way that they grow in the Lord. Instruction with this goal requires daily attention just like family worship.

Who is Family Worship for?

Family worship is for any family who wants to worship Jesus together. Ideally, married couples will begin family worship before children are ever in the picture and will continue even after their children have left home.

However, family worship is especially valuable for families with children still living in the home. Childhood comprises the most formative years of life. Parents have a special opportunity to encourage generational faith with regular family worship.

What does Family Worship accomplish?

First and foremost, family worship offers the praise and worship that is deserved by our Savior. Second, because it incorporates the whole family, family worship reorients the home toward a focus on God’s Kingdom rather than the cares of this world. Finally, family worship encourages the faith development of everyone in the room. As children see their parents worship, they are strengthened. As a dad sees his child open a Bible, he is encouraged to persevere. As a wife hears her husband pray for her by name, she is loved.

Though only three are listed, the benefits of family worship are endless.

-----

As you begin your journey as a family into the regular practice of family worship, I hope you find joy in your efforts. Jesus is a mighty Savior who is worthy of our praise. May we lead our families to bow down to the King in the throne room of God.

Michael Sawyer – Minister to Students
What you need to get started:

This Guide

Every couple of months, a new Family Worship Guide (FWG) pack will be available at Information Central in the commons area. It will be pre-punched and dated so you can add it to your FWG binder easily.

A Bible for every reader

If you have children in the home and they can read, make sure they have a Bible. (Make sure it’s the same translation you’ll be reading from to avoid any confusion.) Even younger children who cannot read enjoy having a Bible in their hands if their parents consistently model Scripture reading.

Tools for your time of singing

Every family has different musical leanings. Our family alternates between singing hymns (ie: Holy, Holy, Holy) and children’s songs (ie: Jesus Loves Me) without any musical backing. Additionally we add in songs that we play from our phones and sing along with. (ie: John 8:12 – Seeds Family Worship)

Whatever you plan to do, be prepared. If your family worship time needs a guitar, make sure it’s tuned and ready to go. If you need a Bluetooth speaker and a song from your phone, make sure they’re charged.
Some Advice for Your Time of Worship

Keep it brief

The following guide will take about ten minutes a day. If you stay focused, you’ll be surprised what you can accomplish in only ten minutes.

Stay focused

Read, discuss, pray, and sing. That’s it.

Know the goal

This is not a “family meeting.” It’s not the place to discuss chores or chastise children for missing homework assignments. This is a time to join in together in the worship of Jesus.

Stay consistent

If at all possible, meet at the same time and at the same place every single time. This is very helpful especially with younger children who thrive within a routine.

Enjoy it

Family worship should never feel like a chore. It is an incredible blessing.
Prioritize it

Everyone is busy. Everyone. To overcome busyness, you must prioritize family worship.

Know your family

The pages that follow are merely a guide. They are not meant to restrain you from doing what’s best for your family. If you have very young children, you might consider straying from the prescribed reading and instead utilize a good children’s story Bible for a time. If your family needs to pray for something else on a specific day, do it.

Know yourself

Heartfelt family worship can only be led by someone who is already worshiping the Lord individually. As a leader in your home, make sure before you ever attempt to lead your family to submit to Jesus, that you are daily surrendering yourself into the service of His Kingdom.
APPENDIX 7

FAMILY WORSHIP GUIDE PASSAGES

The following passages were selected to be used in the FWG in coordination with the extant preaching calendar.
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APPENDIX 8
FAMILY WORSHIP GUIDE WEEKS 1-8

The following guide reflects what was sent to parents and used during the eight weeks of pastoral visitation.
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Family Worship Outline

There are three main components to family worship: Read the Bible, Pray, and Sing.

Read the Bible:

Before you read, a brief introduction will be given. Feel free to read this verbatim to your family or simply read it to yourself to give a little context prior to diving in to the Scripture.

The recommended passages correspond with the Sunday morning sermon that begins the week. A few questions for discussion or reflection are provided.

Pray:

Prayer emphases are based on the recommended passage.

Sing:

Two recommendations are given. The first is a traditional hymn. The second is either a praise song or children’s song. A Spotify playlist for each week can be found on the SOBC Facebook page. Feel free to reuse songs from previous weeks. Admittedly, there may be too many new songs for your family to actively sing if you don’t already know them.

Let this guide serve as just that – a guide. Alter the readings, prayers, or songs to fit your family. You may find it useful to use a children’s Bible with young children periodically. Others may choose to incorporate a structured prayer based on the ACTS model or something similar. Finally, there may be songs your family loves or would love to learn. Feel free to sing those.
Week Start Date: 09/03/17

Sunday’s Sermon: “What Good is God’s Will?”

Passage: Proverbs 3:5-6

Life Giving Truth:

Your family’s plan to meet this week:

Day One:  __:__ AM or PM
Day Two:  __:__ AM or PM
Day Three:  __:__ AM or PM
Day Four:  __:__ AM or PM
Day Five:  __:__ AM or PM
Day One
God’s will is something that many Christians wrestle with. Today’s passage addresses our foundational response to God’s direction: trust.

This trust is displayed in how we think (verses 5-8), how we use our resources (verses 9-10), and how we accept His discipline (verses 11-12).

As we read, pray, and sing, think about ways in which we display our trust in God.

Read

Scripture Reference: Proverbs 3:5-12

1. What is one way we can trust God with our thinking?
2. What is one way we can trust God with our resources?
3. What is one way we can trust God when He gives us instructions that are difficult to follow?

Pray

If there is a specific area in which your family is struggling to trust God, pray about that today.

Sing

- Hymn- “Trust and Obey” (John H. Sammis)
- Child’s Song- “Trust in the Lord” (Seeds Family Worship)
Day Two

Yesterday we read about the foundational response to God’s direction: trust. Today we’ll read about the necessary response when we discover God’s will: obedience.

Jesus made it very clear, whenever God gives instructions, He expects people to listen and obey. This passage gives two clear examples of people who failed to obey God’s instruction.

As you read, pray, and sing, think about ways in which your family displays their obedience to the will of God.

Read

Scripture Reference: Matthew 7:21-27

1. Have you ever thought of a willingness to do God’s will as a litmus test for your relationship with God? (For young children, you might say “One way God knows we love Him is if we obey Him.”)

2. In what areas of our family have we paid the price for “building our house on the sand”?

3. Where have we avoided danger by building our house on a solid foundation?

Pray

Identify a specific area in which your family can obey God this week. Pray for the desire and ability to follow through in obedience.

Sing

- Hymn- “Trust and Obey” (John H. Sammis)

- Child’s Song (Pre-K) - “The Wise Man Built His House” (childbiblesongs.com)
Day Three
Today’s text is brief but challenging.

Our bodies are to be presented as a sacrifice to God. However, there are three qualifiers:

1. Living- We must present ourselves to God full of life and energy, not lazily or apathetically.

2. Holy- We must set ourselves completely for God’s purposes, not partially or half-heartedly.

3. Acceptable- We must strive to be pleasing to God, not self-serving or for personal gain.

Additionally, we should strive for spiritual discernment so we will be able to understand what God wants us to do. When we know what to do, we can follow through in obedience.

Read

Scripture Reference: Romans 12:1-2

1. When worshipping God, what aspect of the three do you struggle with the most?

2. In what area of life do we need to pray for discernment so we can know the will of God and act on it?

Pray

As time allows, pray for your answers to both questions from the Scripture discussion.

Sing

- Hymn- “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” (Isaac Watts)
- Praise Song- “Living Sacrifice” (Joel Engle)
Day Four
God’s will certainly includes obedience to his commands. Read what Douglas Moo says about the end of this passage:

For we have a tendency, when we think of sin, to think only of those things we have done that we should not have done. I know my own confessions before the Lord tend to focus on these kinds of sins. But I should also consider those ways in which I have failed to do what the Lord has commanded me to do. Perhaps I did not reach out to help a “neighbor” in need; or perhaps I failed to bear witness to a co-worker when I had the opportunity. These also are sins for which I must seek God’s forgiveness.¹

Read
Scripture Reference: James 4:1-17

1. The theme through this passage is submission and humility before God. Where have we abandoned humility and failed to consider God in our planning?

2. Are there any sins, where we failed to do the right thing, which we need to repent from?

Pray
Pray specifically for forgiveness of any sins discussed with your family.

Sing

- Hymn- “Day by Day” (Skoog, Sandell)
- Praise Song- “Amazing Grace” (Chris Tomlin)

Day Five
We end the week with a wonderful promise found in this passage. Those who place their faith in the Son, Jesus, will have eternal life and be raised up on the last day.

If you have time and want to explore this idea further, take a look at Romans 10:9-10.

Read

Scripture Reference: John 6:35-40

1. What does it mean to you that Jesus submitted Himself to the Father’s will?

2. Who can we pray for that has not found eternal life in Jesus?

Pray

Pray specifically for those in your family and your community that do not have a relationship with Jesus. Try to have each family member pray for one specific person.

Sing

- Hymn- “Just as I Am, Without One Plea” (Charlotte Elliott)
- Praise Song- “Salvation is Here” (Lincoln Brewster)
Week Start Date: 09/10/17

Sunday’s Sermon: “God Makes All the Difference”

Passages: Ecclesiastes 3:10-14, 12:13-14

Life Giving Truth:


Your family’s plan to meet this week:

Day One: ____:____ AM or PM
Day Two: ____:____ AM or PM
Day Three: ____:____ AM or PM
Day Four: ____:____ AM or PM
Day Five: ____:____ AM or PM
Day One
Solomon’s conclusion to the book of Ecclesiastes includes a directive to “Fear God and keep His commandments.”

To align our families around this goal, we will look at the most notable commandments in Scripture: The Ten Commandments.

Before the Israelites received the commandments, they were instructed to “consecrate themselves.” They needed to prepare themselves spiritually to hear from God.

Read

Scripture Reference: Exodus 19:1-17

1. What are some ways we prepare to encounter God?

2. Are there any things we could do to better prepare for our time of Family Worship each day?

Pray

Spend some time praying for the rest of your week. Pray that your hearts would be ready to hear from God.

Sing

- Hymn- “Have Thine Own Way, Lord” (Adelaide Pollard)

- Praise Song- “No Fear in Love” (Steffany Gretzinger)
Day Two

Today we see the Ten Commandments. This picture should help your family to be able to easily see all ten.

1. You shall have no other gods before me
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God
4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy
5. Honor your father and your mother
6. You shall not murder
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet... anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Read

Scripture Reference: Exodus 19:18-20:17

1. Discuss, as time allows, how each commandment would be beneficial to people within the nation of Israel.

Pray

Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for the commandments that God gave.

Sing

- Hymn- “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (John Mason Neale)
- Child’s Song- “God is Jealous” (Seeds Family Worship)
Day Three
Shortly after being rescued by God from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites chose to break the first and second commandment.

We can wonder with amazement at how quickly they forgot the God who had saved them. But, this passage serves as a good reminder for us today. We must never forget what God has done for us and what He demands of us.

Read

Scripture Reference: Exodus 32:1-18

1. God certainly showed grace to the Israelites after they made the golden calf. When has God shown grace to our family?

2. Moses was blessed to carry God’s own handiwork down the mountain. Where have we been able to witness God at work?

Pray

Draw attention to where God has either shown grace or been at work. Pray for areas where you would like to see God move again.

Sing

- Hymn- “Grace Greater than Our Sin” (Julia H. Johnston)

- Praise Song- “Amazing Grace” (Chris Tomlin)
Day Four
Yesterday we saw the Israelites make a golden calf to worship. Today we will read Moses’ reaction.

Though he was incredibly angry, he never lost sight of his love for the nation. Verse thirty-two shows how committed he is to obtaining their forgiveness.

Read

Scripture Reference: Exodus 32:19-35

1. Repentance and forgiveness is needed following any sin. Are there any sins that we have committed against one another that we need to repent from and seek forgiveness?

2. Are there any sins that we have committed against God that we should repent from and seek forgiveness?

Pray

Pray as a family out of a repentant heart and a desire for forgiveness in any area that you have discovered sin in your lives.

Sing

- Hymn- “Just as I Am, Without One Plea” (Charlotte Elliott)

- Praise Song- “Forgiven” (Crowder)
Day Five
The original copies of the Ten Commandments had been broken. However, rather than allowing this to end the relationship between Israel and Himself, God instructed Moses to make two more tablets. Despite their unfaithfulness, God would continue in His relationship with Israel.

But, God reiterated that he expected the Israelites to obey Him, despite their past disobedience. The fact that God sought a relationship with this nation did not mean that they could continue to break His commands.

Read

Scripture Reference: Exodus 34:1-28

1. Verse ten speaks of the awesome things God will do. In every relationship where God is present, He should receive the glory. How are we bringing God glory as a family?

2. In what ways can each of us bring God glory at home, work, or school?

Pray

Take some time to pray specifically that God would use your family for His glory.

Sing

- Hymn- “To God be the Glory” (Fanny J. Crosby)

- Child’s Song- “Ten Commandment Boogie” (Go Fish)
Week Start Date: 09/17/17

Sunday’s Sermon: “A Brighter Picture”

Passage: Isaiah 6:1-13

Life Giving Truth:

Your family’s plan to meet this week:

Day One: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Two: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Three: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Four: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Five: ___:___ AM or PM
Day One
This week, we will be reading various accounts of God calling someone into His service.

In today’s passage, we read of Isaiah’s vision. When confronted with the holiness of God, Isaiah recognizes that his own faults stand in stark contrast to the perfection of the Lord.

Read


1. Once Isaiah recognized his sin, how did the seraphim (angel) respond?

2. Isaiah was cleansed from sin and then called to action. Do you think that “cleansing from sin” and “calling to action” always happen in this order?

Pray

God may be calling members of your family to specific actions for Him. Pray for a clean heart and a willingness to act.

Sing

- Hymn- “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!” (Reginald Heber)

- Child’s Song- “God is Holy” (Seeds Family Worship)
Day Two
Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel, left his country, his relatives, and the house of his father in order to follow God’s call.

We will often be asked to leave comfort and familiarity to follow God’s call in our own lives. However, the tradeoff is always worth it.

Read

Scripture Reference: Genesis 12:1-7

1. What would be the hardest thing for you to leave behind to follow God’s call?

2. Where have you seen God bless our family for choosing to follow Him instead of choosing to stay comfortable?

Pray

Pray with your family for God to show you where you are choosing comfort rather than to follow His call.

Sing

- Hymn- “Take My Life, Lead Me, Lord” (R. Maine Rawls)

- Praise Song- “I Will Follow” (Chris Tomlin)
Day Three
David is anointed by Samuel to be the king of Israel. In these verses it appears that God looks at one major criteria in selecting those who will represent Him; the heart.

Though David stumbled at times as king, his heart remained focused on the Lord.

Read

Scripture Reference: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

1. Discuss this quote as time allows:

The Lord alone has the capacity to observe and judge a person’s “heart”, that is, one’s thoughts, emotions, and intents. On God’s scales these matters outweigh all other aspects of a human life.²

Pray

Today may need to be a time of corporate confession and repentance. If you need to personally repent of any areas where you are not honoring God with your heart, take the time to do so.

Sing

- Hymn- “Change My Heart, Oh God” (Eddie Espinosa)

- Praise Song- “King of My Heart” (John Mark McMillan)

Day Four
In these two passages we see the calling of a few of the disciples. Simon Peter is first called to be a “fisher of men” at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry.

Though Simon Peter was a passionate follower of Jesus, on the night of Jesus’ crucifixion Simon Peter denied even knowing Jesus.

However, following the death and resurrection of Jesus, Simon Peter is once again reminded that Jesus has called him to minister to Jesus’ people. Despite his shortcomings, Jesus had a task for him to accomplish.

Read


1. Even if we have times of failure, Jesus still desires to use us in His work. How does this thought impact your desire to serve Jesus?

2. Is there anything that we do (or don’t do) as a family that would make people think we are denying who Jesus is?

Pray

Depending on how your time of reading and discussion goes, pray for either a renewed passion for serving the Lord or an increased boldness for sharing the gospel.

Sing

- Hymn- “Jesus Paid it All” (Elvina M. Hall)

- Child’s Song- “I Will Make You Fishers of Men” (The Wonder Kids)
Day Five
Yesterday we read about Simon Peter’s call to serve Jesus.

Today we read about his faithfulness to that calling.

Simon Peter preaches the good news of Jesus Christ to a group of Jewish people. This proclamation has two actions tied to it, repentance and baptism.

Scripture makes it very clear; the faithful response to hearing the gospel is repentance and baptism.

Read


1. Take some time to discuss baptism as a family. If there are any family members who have not been baptized, explain what baptism means. (For more information, see Information Central)

Pray

If anyone in your family desires to be baptized, spend some time praising God for this decision. Pray for others who have not responded to the gospel with repentance.

Sing

- Hymn- “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less” (Edward Mote)
- Praise Song- “At the Cross” (Chris Tomlin)
Week Start Date: 09/24/17

Sunday’s Sermon: “Breaking Through by Praying Through”

Passage: Jeremiah 33:1-3

Life Giving Truth:


Your family’s plan to meet this week:

Day One: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Two: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Three: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Four: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Five: ___:___ AM or PM
Day One

The passage for Sunday’s sermon concluded with a brief time of thanksgiving. Throughout the week we will read various psalms of thanksgiving. Each one will provide various things which our family can be thankful for.

In today’s passage, David expresses thanksgiving to the Lord. Of particular note, David recognizes that God knew him even when he was in the womb.

Read

Scripture Reference: Psalm 139

1. Verses thirteen through sixteen suggest that God knows everything about your life from your beginnings in the womb even until your death. How does this bolster your confidence in God?

Pray

Praying through Scripture may be new to your family. Do not let it scare you. Praying the Word is a great way to pray. Today, read verses thirteen through sixteen as a prayer of thanksgiving.

Sing

- Hymn- “Have Thine Own Way, Lord” (Adelaide Pollard)
- Praise Song- “Psalm 139” (Shane and Shane)
Day Two

Fear can create many responses in different people. Some withdraw. Others run. Still others stand and fight.

David models the perfect response in this psalm; trusting in the Lord.

Read

Scripture Reference: Psalm 27

1. David encountered many enemies in his lifetime. However, he continued to trust in the Lord. Where are we choosing fear over trust?

2. He concludes the psalm with an instruction to wait. We typically want our fears to go away immediately. David understood that sometimes patience is needed while trusting in the Lord. Where do we need to show patience in the Lord and wait for Him to work?

Pray

Pray with your family for God to strengthen your resolve when doing His work. As you close your time of prayer, pray verse one together.

Sing

- Hymn- “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me” (Augustus Toplady)
- Praise Song- “Whom Shall I Fear” (Chris Tomlin)
Day Three
Today’s passage calls everyone to praise the Lord.

Verse two specifically instructs us to come before Him with joyful singing. It doesn’t have to sound perfect. But, it should be joyful.

Read

Scripture Reference: Psalm 100

1. Let’s talk about our time of singing as a family; what could we do to make it more joyful?

2. If there was any song we could sing with our entire church, what would we want to sing?

Pray

Today, spend some time listing out various things you would like to praise God for. Conclude your prayer by praying this entire psalm.

Sing

- Hymn- “Praise to the Lord, The Almighty” (Joachim Neander)

- Children’s Song- “Shout (Psalm 100:1-3)” (Seeds Family Worship)
Day Four
The Lord is often referred to as a shepherd. Shepherds protect the sheep, ensure the sheep have food to eat and water to drink, guide them where they need to go, and call them back to the flock.

Verse four drives home the point that the Lord is a good shepherd. Even in the scariest places, we can have confidence in the protection and direction that God gives.

Read

Scripture Reference: Psalm 23

1. David wrote from a place of personal experience. In his youth, David was a shepherd for his father’s sheep. How does this impact the way you view this psalm?

2. Where have we seen God shepherd our family through the years?

Pray

Praise God for His faithful provision for your family. As you close out your time of prayer, pray through verses one through four.

Sing

- Hymn- “Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us” (Dorothy Thrupp)

- Praise Song- “Psalm 23” (Shane and Shane)
Day Five

Today’s psalm may sound a little repetitive. The effect is that everything that God is remembered for is framed within His enduring love.

Thankfulness is the natural response to the Lord’s unrelenting and unfailing love for His people. As you read, try having your entire family say the repeating words together.

Read

Scripture Reference: Psalm 136

1. How has God shown love to our family?

2. As time allows, write your own psalm remembering the ways in which God has shown love to your family.

Pray

If you wrote a psalm, pray through that psalm today. If not, take some time to give thanks to God for His love for your family, especially in providing a way for salvation.

Sing

- Hymn- “To God be the Glory” (Fanny J. Crosby)

- Praise Song- “Forever” (Michael W. Smith)
Week Start Date: 10/01/17

Sunday’s Sermon: “Drawing a Line in the Sand”

Passage: Daniel 1:1-21

Life Giving Truth:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Your family’s plan to meet this week:

Day One:  ____:____ AM or PM
Day Two:  ____:____ AM or PM
Day Three:  ____:____ AM or PM
Day Four:  ____:____ AM or PM
Day Five:  ____:____ AM or PM
Day One
Today we read the beginning of Daniel’s story in the Old Testament. As a youth, probably fourteen or fifteen years old, he was taken into Babylonian captivity to be trained for the king’s personal service.

Over the span of three years Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah would receive an education and daily provisions so they would be ready to serve the king when called upon.

As we read, pay close attention to the following changes these four boys would experience: location, education, diet, names.

Read

Scripture Reference: Daniel 1:1-7

1. What changes did you notice for these four?

2. For three years, these boys were to be trained to give up their “Jewish-ness” so they could fit in with the other servants of king Nebuchadnezzar. Where are we tempted to give up our “Christian-ness” to fit in?

Pray

Your time of Scripture reading may lead to the need to pray for help living a consistently Christian life. Pray for God’s grace where you have failed to be true to your faith as well as the conviction to live every day for Christ.

Sing

- Hymn- “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” (Robert Robinson)

- Praise Song- “From the Inside Out” (Hillsong)
Day Two

Yesterday we were introduced to Daniel. Today we’ll see his resolve.

Rather than taking the easy route and eating what his captors offered him to eat, Daniel chose not to eat the food. Eating the king’s food would have gone against the Mosaic law that the Jewish people were committed to following. Instead, Daniel obtains permission from one of the people in charge of his food to try out a specialized diet for ten days.

It can be assumed that for the remainder of the three years of his training that Daniel remained faithful to his Jewish heritage and desire to follow the Lord.

Read

Scripture Reference: Daniel 1:8-21

1. Daniel chose to follow God’s way and the results were significantly better than if he had followed the king’s way. Where have we seen following God end better than if we hadn’t?

Pray

Ask your family if there is any area in which they are trying to sort through God’s will. Pray for clarity in your attempt to follow the Lord’s will.

Sing

- Hymn- “Take My Life and Let it Be (Frances Ridley Havergal)

- Praise Song- “Christ the Sure and Steady Anchor” (Matt Boswell)
Day Three
In today’s reading, Daniel is only moments from death. The king needs a dream interpreted and none of the wise men can do it. In turn, the king orders that all the wise men should be killed.

Daniel gains a temporary halt to his execution but is left with one chance to save his life and the lives of his companions.

Read

Scripture Reference: Daniel 2:1-18

1. Even the wise men that did not follow the Lord recognized that they would need divine intervention to tell the king his dream and its interpretation. As a family, where have we been slow to acknowledge that a situation can only be resolved with God’s intervention?

2. Daniel went straight to his companions and encouraged them all to seek God’s intervention. Where do we need God to intervene right now?

Pray

Make a list of the top few areas where you need God to intervene in your family’s lives right now. Pray for these now and commit to pray for them throughout the rest of the week.

Sing

- Hymn- “It Is Well with My Soul” (Horatio Gates Spafford)
- Praise Song- “Came to My Rescue” (Hillsong)
Day Four

Yesterday, Daniel’s life was on the line. Today we find out if he does indeed die.

Verse eighteen ends with Daniel and his three companions praying for mercy from God. Verse nineteen reveals God’s response. And it’s great. God comes through and reveals the mystery of the king’s dream to Daniel.

Daniel responds the only appropriate way, with praise.

Read

Scripture Reference: Daniel 2:19-35

1. As Christians, God has intervened on our behalf to save our lives. However, instead of a vision like Daniel, we received a Savior. Do we offer the same amount of praise that Daniel did?

2. When the king heard from Daniel, he heard a testimony that pointed toward the greatness of God. Do our testimonies reflect this same attitude about God’s greatness?

Pray

Take some time to praise God for the salvation you have in Jesus. Pray for those who do not know Jesus.

Sing

- Hymn- “O Worship the King” (Robert King)
- Praise Song- “Praise the King” (Corey Voss)
Day Five
Today’s reading will bring this part of Daniel’s story to a close. He has just finished telling the king all about the dream and now he is prepared to interpret it for the king. Though the specifics of the interpretation are certainly interesting one of the most incredible things is the king’s response.

When faced with a miracle, the telling and interpretation of his dream, the king falls flat on his face and praises the One True God.

God may use people in miraculous ways, but it is God who always deserves the glory.

Read

Scripture Reference: Daniel 2:36-49

1. This is the second time in Daniel’s life where a dependence on God has paid off. How are we doing at this point in our prayers for God’s intervention in our greatest areas of need?

Pray

If you made a list on day three, continue praying for God’s intervention. Additionally, give God thanks for His intervention in other situations in your family’s past.

Sing

- Hymn- “To God Be the Glory” (Fanny J. Crosby)
- Praise Song- “O Great God” (Matt Boswell)
Week Start Date: 10/08/17

Sunday’s Sermon: “Take the Heat”

Passage: Daniel 3:8-30

Life Giving Truth:


Your family’s plan to meet this week:

Day One: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Two: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Three: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Four: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Five: ___:___ AM or PM
Day One
Daniel’s companions once again face death because of their faith. This time, King Nebuchadnezzar attempts to force Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to worship an idol he had constructed.

When confronted by the king, these three men refuse to bow down; even if it costs them their lives.

Read
Scripture Reference: Daniel 3:1-18

1. Do you think you would bow down to a false idol to save your life?

2. How do you think the decision not to eat the king’s food years ago prepared these three men for the decision not to bow down to his idol?

Pray
Faithfulness to God in the little things often leads to faithfulness in the big things. Pray to God for your personal faithfulness in any small task that is placed in front of you this week.

Sing
- Hymn- “O Worship the King” (Robert King)
- Praise Song- “Praise the King” (Corey Voss)
Day Two
Today’s reading shows God’s provision of safety for the three men.

King Nebuchadnezzar starts off incredibly angry, but by the end of the passage he has a clear admiration for the men who defied his orders in order to stay true to their God.

It is not always easy to stay faithful to God. There is certainly a price to pay sometimes. However, even people who do not know the Lord take note when Christians are faithful through adversity.

Read
Scripture Reference: Daniel 3:19-30

1. Have you ever been encouraged by another believer’s faithfulness through difficult times?

2. Are there any other believers we can encourage who are going through a difficult time today?

Pray
Take some time to pray for those who need encouragement. If time allows, contact the people who came to mind in either question. Express gratitude to those from question number one. Offer encouragement to those from question number two.

Sing

- Hymn- “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” (Martin Luther)

- Praise Song- “We Will Feast in the House of Zion” (Sandra McCracken)
Day Three
Following multiple miracles, King Nebuchadnezzar begins to understand how great and wonderful the God that Daniel and his companions serve is. The king recognizes that God deserves to be praised even though he worships false gods.

After he praises God, he once again turns to Daniel to interpret a dream. However, unlike last time, the king does not threaten him with his life. Instead, he summons Daniel because he trusts him.

Read
Scripture Reference: Daniel 4:1-18

1. Is there anyone we trust to speak God’s truth to us?

2. Is there anything going on in our lives right now where we need to receive God’s guidance?

Pray
God deserves to be praised. Pray verse three aloud as a part of a prayer of praise to God today.

Sing

- Hymn- “Praise Him! Praise Him!” (Fanny J. Crosby)
- Praise Song- “The Quest” (Seeds Family Worship)

\^Available online as a free download at www.seedsfamilyworship.com
Day Four
Daniel must now give the interpretation of the vision to the king.
It’s not good. The king will be driven from his position of
leadership, even eating grass like cattle, until he recognizes the God
is above all and is the ruler of all.

Read
Scripture Reference: Daniel 4:19-27

1. Has there ever been a time where God has used a major
disappointment or even embarrassment to call us back to
Him?

2. Are we guilty of failing to trust in the Lord in any area as a
family right now?

Pray
Spend some time praying for God to show you areas in which you
need to trust Him more.

Sing

- Hymn- “Softly and Tenderly” (Will L. Thompson)
- Praise Song- “This I Believe” (Hillsong Worship)
Day Five
Today concludes Nebuchadnezzar’s most recent vision. Everything he saw came true.

In the midst of his pride, God put him in a place of humility. Nebuchadnezzar recognized that God’s sovereignty and control over everything is something to be praised rather than rejected.

It is this truth that allows him to end this chapter in praise.

Read
Scripture Reference: Daniel 4:28-37

1. How different does Nebuchadnezzar sound at the end of this passage compared to when we first read about him in Daniel 2?

2. Daniel’s ministry to Nebuchadnezzar had a major impact. Who do we need to be more intentional about ministering to?

Pray
Pray for opportunities to minister to others. Pray especially for those that God has lain on your hearts.

Sing
- Hymn- “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms” (Elisha A. Hoffman)

- Praise Song- “Everlasting God” (Brenton Brown)
Week Start Date: 10/15/17

Sunday’s Sermon: “Unwavering Faith”

Passage: Daniel 6:1-15

Life Giving Truth:

Your family’s plan to meet this week:

Day One: ____ : ____ AM or PM
Day Two: ____ : ____ AM or PM
Day Three: ____ : ____ AM or PM
Day Four: ____ : ____ AM or PM
Day Five: ____ : ____ AM or PM
Day One
King Nebuchadnezzar has passed away. In his place Belshazzar has now become king.

In the middle of a great feast, Belshazzar begins drinking from cups that had been taken out of the temple in Jerusalem. What’s more, as they drank they offered praise to false gods.

At the height of their sin, a hand appears and begins writing on the wall. Daniel is once again summoned to interpret a message; this time, for a new king.

Read

Scripture Reference: Daniel 5:1-12

1. King Belshazzar made a mockery of things that were set aside for the purpose of worshipping God. How can we make sure we do not make a mockery of God with our worship?

Pray

Pray for our church’s corporate worship service. Pray for those who lead on Sundays at 11:00am. Pray that our worship each week would be pleasing to God.

Sing

- Hymn- “Brethren, We Have Met to Worship” (George Atkins)

- Praise Song- “We Will Feast in the House of Zion” (Sandra McCracken)
Day Two
Daniel interprets the message for King Belshazzar. Like the last interpretation Daniel gave to Nebuchadnezzar, this was not good news.

The interpretation would not take long to be proven correct. That very night, Belshazzar would lose the kingdom and his life. The end of this passage refers to the fall of the Babylonian empire, a very significant historical event.

Read

Scripture Reference: Daniel 5:13-31

1. Has there ever been a time where we’ve done something wrong and we immediately felt the consequences of our bad decision?

2. How can we help guard each other from making bad decisions that have disastrous consequences?

Pray

Spend some time praying for each other. Pray for wisdom in decisions. Pray for wisdom in how you counsel one another.

Sing

- Hymn- “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise” (Walter Chalmers Smith)

- Praise Song- “The Perfect Wisdom of Our God” (Keith Getty)
Day Three
Today’s reading tells the first half of the best known episode in Daniel’s life. Once again, albeit within a new nation, Daniel is appointed to a place of leadership.

As time goes on, Daniel begins to rise to a place of prominence within the entire group of leaders. Rather than accepting him, the other leaders try everything they can to remove him from this high position.

Because of the integrity with which he lived life, the only problem they could find with Daniel was his commitment to the Lord.

Read

Scripture Reference: Daniel 6:1-15

1. If people were trying to dig up dirt on us, would the worst thing they find be our commitment to the Lord?

2. Daniel’s faith was evident to everyone around him. Is our faith that obvious to others?

Pray

Pray for opportunities to share your faith with others. Also, take some time to pray for any sins that need to be confessed and removed from your lives.

Sing

- Hymn- “Change My Heart, Oh God” (Eddie Espinosa)
- Praise Song- “King of My Heart” (John Mark McMillan)
Day Four

Yesterday, Daniel was discovered to be disobedient to a decree that forbade him from praying to God. Daniel will now be punished for defying the king’s order. But, rather than being malicious and angry while administering the punishment, the king wanted Daniel’s God to save him.

Read

Scripture Reference: Daniel 6:16-28

1. Why do you think the king wanted Daniel to live?

2. As Daniel came through this final trial, Darius praised God. Throughout Daniel’s life, his trials always resulted in people praising God. Are we consistent in praising God, even in the midst of trials?

Pray

Begin your time of prayer by praying verses twenty six and twenty seven as praise to God. Transition from this into a time of prayer for any trials your family is facing.

Sing

- Hymn- “He Is Able to Deliver Thee” (William Ogden)
- Praise Song- “I Am Set Free (All Sons and Daughters)
Day Five

Over the past few days we’ve read about Daniel, his integrity, his faithful worship, and his triumph over difficulties. Today, we are going to close the week with a Psalm of David.

David tells us to be willing to confess our sins to God so that we might find forgiveness. Additionally, those who trust in the Lord will not be let down. Instead, those who trust will find themselves surrounded with God’s love.

Read

Scripture Reference: Psalm 32:1-11

1. Have you ever felt drained or tired because of the weight of sin?

2. Certainly receiving forgiveness is one thing that increases our faith in God. What other things help us trust God more?

Pray

Spend some time praising God for forgiveness that comes through Jesus. Pray for trusting hearts that follow God wherever He leads.

Sing

- Hymn- “Jesus, Lover of my Soul” (Charles Wesley)

- Praise Song- “Gracious Redeemer” (Austin Stone Worship)
Week Start Date: 10/22/17

Sunday’s Sermon: “Man on the Run”

Passage: Jonah 1:1-17, 2:1-10

Life Giving Truth:

Your family’s plan to meet this week:

Day One: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Two: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Three: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Four: ___:___ AM or PM
Day Five: ___:___ AM or PM
Day One
Jonah’s calling to preach to the city of Nineveh and his response is one of the most well-known parts of the Old Testament. When we first meet Jonah he is receiving an instruction from the Lord.

There is no question about it, God expects Jonah to go to Nineveh immediately. However, Jonah’s response is anything but obedient. While some people may try to excuse Jonah’s behavior, it is evident that he was openly rebelling against God.

Read

Scripture Reference: Jonah 1:1-6

1. Has there ever been a time where you have clearly understood that God wanted you to do something?

2. Did you respond with obedience or disobedience?

Pray

Spend some time praying for anything God has called your family to do. Pray for faithfulness in the big and small things.

Sing

- Hymn- “I Surrender All” (Judson W. Van DeVenter)
- Praise Song- “Oceans” (Hillsong)
Day Two
In the midst of the storm everyone on the boat tried to discover who was at fault for bringing this calamity upon them. Once confronted, Jonah took ownership of his responsibility and was cast into the sea.

In normal circumstances this would have been the end of Jonah, alone at sea in the middle of a storm. People in that situation don’t last long.

But, God had other plans. In one of the most memorable miracles in Scripture, the Lord saves Jonah.

Read

Scripture Reference: Jonah 1:7-17

1. God intervenes in our lives in some incredible ways. What are some ways in which God has blessed our family unexpectedly?

2. Is there anything going on in our lives where we feel like we are alone in the middle of a storm?

Pray

Allow the answers to the two questions shape your prayer today. Spend time in praise and thanksgiving for where God has blessed. Also, focus on a time of petition asking for God’s provision in the midst of a storm.

Sing

- Hymn- “It Is Well with My Soul” (Horatio Gates Spafford)

- Praise Song- “Christ the Sure and Steady Anchor” (Matt Boswell)
Day Three

Today’s passage is almost entirely a prayer. Rather than going to a prayer closet, kneeling by a bed, or circling around the dinner table, Jonah opts to pray right where he is; the belly of a fish.

This has to be the most surreal prayer experience ever. Having been saved from drowning, even after running from the Lord, Jonah praises God for his salvation.

Jonah has now received a second chance at life. In response, he commits to follow the Lord’s instructions.

Read

Scripture Reference: Jonah 2:1-10

1. Take some time and write out a prayer like Jonah’s. Highlight the following four areas; the crisis you were experiencing, the parts that scared you, God’s work to save you from the crisis, your response of thankfulness to God.

Pray

As a family, pray the prayer you wrote out. If you did not do that, pray Jonah’s prayer together.

Sing

- Hymn- “Jesus Paid it All” (Elvina M. Hall)
- Praise Song- “Salvation is Here” (Joel Houston)
Day Four

The people in Nineveh were enemies of Jonah. However, despite this fact and the message that Jonah brought, the people listened.

Even the king of Nineveh humbled himself to submit to God’s authority. All the people in Nineveh were instructed to repent and seek mercy from God.

God responds with compassion to the people of Nineveh. “Here one finds irrefutable evidence that God wishes not for the destruction of the sinner but for the redemption and reconciliation of all his creation.”

Read

Scripture Reference: Jonah 3:1-10

1. Who do we know who needs to repent and seek mercy from God?

2. Are we guilty of thinking that they may be too far gone?

Pray

Take some time to pray for anyone in your family or that you listed in the first question to find salvation in Jesus. Pray for hearts of compassion for everyone you meet.

Sing

- Hymn- “At the Cross” (Isaac Watts)

- Praise Song- “The Wondrous Cross” (Christy Nockels)

---

Day Five
As Jonah’s story concludes we see a man who, having personally received mercy from God, rejects mercy that is shown to others. Despite preaching a message of repentance to the Ninevites and observing their response, Jonah did not want to see God pour out his mercy on an enemy of Israel.

God’s work in Nineveh was much bigger than Jonah. It focused on thousands. It is never good to limit the scope of God’s plans based on our own perspective.

Read
Scripture Reference: Jonah 4:1-11

1. God certainly intervenes in our lives. However, where do we see a need for God to work in the lives of other families?

2. How can we be of assistance to those families?

Pray
As you wrap up your week, pray for others. God’s work extends far beyond your home. Pray for your church family. Pray for the ministry of Christians across the world.

Sing

- Hymn- “Depth of Mercy” (Charles Wesley)

- Praise Song- “Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery” (Matt Boswell)
Moving Forward

If you’ve reached the end of this guide, good news! We’ve got more resources for you. Head to “Information Central” at Shady Oaks to grab the Family Worship Guide for the upcoming weeks, starting with 10/29/17.

You can also go to www.shadyoaks.org and download the PDF if you’d rather use it digitally.

If there is anything we can help with regarding family worship in your home, please let us know.

Michael Sawyer
Minister to Students

msawyer@shadyoaks.org
APPENDIX 9
EXPERT PANEL EVALUATIONS

The following pages are the responses from the expert panel who evaluated the FWG.
## Family Worship Guide (FWG) Evaluation Tool

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| The FWG is intuitive to use.                                           |   |   | × |   |          |
| The FWG provides clear direction for obtaining and using sources not provided directly to parents. |   |   | × |   |          |

**Recommendations for parents with children of**
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Please include any other comments regarding the Family Worship Guide below:

Michael,

You have done excellent work here and I am confident this will bless your congregation. Something along these lines could even be published. You may want to think about that.

By His Grace,

[Signature]

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Please include any other comments regarding the Family Worship Guide below:

This is very well done. Thorough. Well thought out. Nicely done. Great job all the way around.

[Signature]

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Please include any other comments regarding the Family Worship Guide below:

1. The daily content is sound, but your pre-binding material has only one passage about family worship, as I recall. The passage is not quoted (only cited), and isn’t one of the best options (especially if choosing only one) to demonstrate that family worship is a biblical concept. (The Deut. passage shows that children should be taught the things of God, but someone could do that and still not have family worship.) I know you have to be brief in the intro, but I’d suggest expanding it a bit more to make a better case for the biblical basis of family worship.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


ABSTRACT

TRAINING THE PARENTS OF SHADY OAKS BAPTIST CHURCH, HURST, TEXAS, TO LEAD FAMILY WORSHIP

Michael Geoffrey Sawyer, D.Ed.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Danny R. Bowen

This project was designed to train the parents of Shady Oaks Baptist Church in Hurst, Texas, to lead family worship in their homes. The project included assessing the current level of family discipleship practices and perceptions to gain a preliminary understanding of the families that would be ministered to. The core of the project consisted of developing a family worship guide for parents to use during family worship as well as two, one-hour, training sessions with the parents during a pastoral visit.

Chapter 1 introduces the context of Shady Oaks Baptist Church, along with the rationale, purpose, goals, research methodologies, definitions, and delimitations of the project. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological basis for the need to train parents to lead family worship. Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Ephesians 6:1-4, and 2 Timothy 1:3-5 serve as the bedrock to this argument. Chapter 3 provides a historical and philosophical basis for utilizing pastoral visitation as the means of training parents in family worship. Noted pastors of today and the past are given as prime examples of this method. Chapter 4 details the assessment of parents, the development of the family worship guide, and the pastoral visitation that families received. Chapter 5 provides an overall evaluation of the project with suggestions for improvements if the project were to be repeated.
VITA

Michael Geoffrey Sawyer

EDUCATIONAL
- B.A., Howard Payne University, 2008
- M.A., Howard Payne University, 2010

MINISTERIAL
- Youth Minister, First Baptist Church Mullin, Mullin, Texas, 2006-2008
- Youth Pastor, Mt. Gilead Baptist Church, Keller, Texas, 2008-2010
- Associate Minister to Students, First Baptist Church Georgetown, Georgetown, Texas, 2010-2012
- Minister to Students, Shady Oaks Baptist Church, Hurst, Texas, 2012-