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DEVELOPING A FAMILY WORSHIP CURRICULUM FOR
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN KELLER, TEXAS

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DEVELOPING A FAMILY WORSHIP CURRICULUM FOR
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PREFACE

I have been shaped, encouraged, and supported in my spiritual and intellectual growth throughout my life and especially during the completion of this ministry project. First, this endeavor could not have been completed without the unwavering love, support, and sacrifice of my wonderful wife, Michelle. Saying I could not have done this without her is not an understatement but the very truth.

Second, I thank God for our two children, Eden and Grady, who sacrificed time away from me so that I could study and work on this ministry project. I pray they will always know how much I love them and how time spent on this research was mostly motivated so that I could be better equipped as a father in helping them grow in the knowledge and love for Jesus.

Third, I thank the Lord for my parents, Duane and Becky Perkinson, who modeled and taught me what a Christ-centered life looked like. Mom and Dad, thank you for showing me by your words and actions what it how to love Jesus and how to love others. You have always believed and supported my endeavors while encouraging me to work hard with all my heart.

Fourth, I am incredibly thankful for my church family at First Baptist Church Keller for believing in me and for supporting me in so many ways through this project. It is an incredible joy to serve and minister alongside my brothers and sisters at FBCK and I pray that through this time of research, we will all grow into more mature and multiplying followers of Christ for years to come.

I would also like to thank my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Dustin Bruce, for his helpful leadership and guidance throughout this doctoral project. His insights directed me to a greater depth of thinking and writing.

Finally, may God receive all the glory for the good that has been and will be accomplished through this ministry project. May the Lord be pleased to deepen the family worship culture at FBCK for his glory.

Matt Perkinson

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When asked in Matthew 22:37 what the greatest commandment in the law is, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:5, explaining that it is “to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”¹ The mission of First Baptist Church is to equip believers to become mature and multiplying followers of Jesus Christ. While First Baptist Church firmly believes in equipping the saints for the works of ministry, the primary teachers of God’s faithfulness and statutes to subsequent generations are a child’s immediate family. Parents that teach their children faith in God will lead to stronger, more pious churches. Family worship grows mature followers of Christ through biblical teaching and instruction. This ministry project seeks to establish a six-week curriculum to teach and further equip the people at First Baptist Church to love the Lord by engaging in family worship for the glory of God and the transformation of hearts and minds in individuals and families.

Context

First Baptist Church Keller (FBCK) maintains a rich heritage and commitment to spiritual depth and maturity while enjoying a unique unity within the church that hungers and thirsts after righteousness. The senior pastor is an excellent expositor and theologian who leads by word and deed with humility. The Word of God is highly regarded as the ultimate authority, which has deepened the faith of the congregants richly.

While the congregants are being taught rich theology, the wisdom to apply these theological truths to daily life lacks understanding. For example, while FBCK firmly

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

believes in children attending corporate worship with their parents beginning in kindergarten, the preschool music program, known as Preschool Praise, is loosely pastorally supervised and most of the music that is sung comes from Seeds Family Worship. Beginning in fifth grade through twelfth grade, the youth ministry sings primarily CCLI's top one-hundred, and in corporate worship they are exposed to a mix of ancient and modern, led by various ensembles such as a band and 35-piece orchestra, with piano and organ. Biblical truth is being taught with clarity and boldness, yet there is not a congruency of vocabulary and practice that fosters intersection between generations that connect theology and doxology. This had led to a compartmentalization between ministries, and even though the Word of God is being taught faithfully, a realized, collective, practical family worship guide for all ages that encourages a culture of gospel-saturated homes is needed. In a consumeristic culture that engrosses itself in the next best thing, a consistency of vocabulary, theology, and doxology must begin at home with families, which will permeate into churches and eventually the world.

Based on numerous conversations with parents, there is a need to establish a family worship curriculum. If church families were polled, it would not be surprising to discover that many men do not lead their family spiritually. Some choose not to lead from a lack of desire, but most are paralyzed due to a lack of knowledge and understanding of where to begin. Even still, those who are more comfortable leading are doing the best they can using materials from Sunday school because that is what is available. In addition, God's people are a singing people historically, and it is no secret that not many families are singing and teaching their children theology through songs. While listening to Christian radio can be beneficial, it often does not contain orthodox theology. In Ephesians 4:12, the pastors are called to "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ," and that must begin with the individual, which then filters into the family: spouse, children, and grandchildren. As stated, FBCK's motto is to "equip people to be mature and multiplying followers of Christ," and while the people hear that frequently

from the pastors, the question must be asked, “How are we intentionally helping our people, mainly our grandparents, parents, and the single parent to impact their families with the gospel?” Sadly, the answer to that question is, “Not enough.”

Historically, FBCK has relied on mass teaching with the occasional one-on-one meeting with a family desiring help regarding family worship practices. When families ask for resources, they are presented with a half-sheet that shares a blurb about Scripture reading, prayer, and singing. In addition, Donald S. Whitney’s book on family worship is suggested as a resource to conclude the assistance.² A study as to how families think and engage in family worship—that is, an intentional time to sing, pray, read, and discuss the Bible—would provide a rich understanding as to how to assist families in home discipleship.

The lack of family worship can lead to spiritual apathy as children mature. Lifeway Research reports that 70 percent of young adults between eighteen and twenty-two years drop out of regular church attendance upon leaving the home.³ This trend will continue to grow as culture continues toward heightened secularism, relativism, and the marginalization of pious living for the glory of God. The church has direct influence as to what occurs in the homes of its congregants, but First Baptist Church must take an active role in equipping its families with a practical and intentional guide to foster and encourage Christ-centered homes for the glory of God through family worship practices.

Rationale

There are several biblical and practical reasons to implement a family worship curriculum. First, while one of FBCK’s primary tenets is “Soli Deo Gloria,” the church lacks the ability to provide biblical and practical help to equip families to glorify God in

² Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

³ Aaron Earls, “Most Teenagers Drop Out of Church as Young Adults,” Lifeway Research, January 15, 2019, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2019/01/15/most-teenagers-drop-out-of-church-as-young-adults/>.

the home. This project will assist the church in equipping FBCK parents and grandparents to take an active role in discipling their families. The worship ministry has taken some steps to provide resources for family worship, but a more deliberate approach is needed to create a culture of families intentionally worshiping in the home.

The second reason to implement a family worship curriculum is because the Bible gives clear commands on worship and how parents are to invest the Word of God into the lives of the family. As demonstrated in the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, God revealed to the Israelites the importance of recognizing God as the only one worthy of worship and that parents must teach their children to worship God in the same way.

The third reason for this curriculum is that the church has relied on corporate worship times and the distribution of books and articles to encourage families to have gospel conversation and biblical training times of worship in the home. While these efforts are good, they are not helpful in providing the necessary model and training parents need to build a culture of family worship in the home. FBCK must take a more active and intentional role to provide tangible teaching opportunities for families to have an active role in the spiritual molding of themselves, spouse, and children. Simply put, it is not enough to provide books as resources, nor is it enough to try to address family discipleship from the pulpit on a Sunday morning. If FBCK hopes to fulfill its mission of *Soli Deo Gloria* in the church and in the homes of its members, then intentional biblical and practical training must be provided to parents.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a curriculum of family worship to grow mature, multiplying followers of Christ at First Baptist Church.

Goals

The following three goals were used to measure the success and completion of the research project. The first goal assessed the current culture, understanding, and trends

of family worship, while the remaining two goals worked to address the results of the current family worship practice questionnaire by providing both didactic and practical teaching to encourage families to grow mature, multiplying followers of Christ in the home.

1. The first goal was to assess the knowledge, confidence, and current family worship practices of families with children ten years old and younger who are members of First Baptist Church.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum on family worship.
3. The third goal was to equip families to develop the regular practice of family worship in the home.

Research Methodology

This section consults the previous mentioned three goals to create a step-by-step ministry plan to strengthen family worship practices in FBCK families. The first goal was to assess the knowledge, confidence, and current family worship practices of families with children ten years old and younger who are members of First Baptist Church. The goal was measured by administering a pre-class survey to seven couples who all had children under ten years of age to measure their current family worship perceptions and practices.⁴ Applying a survey that addressed key biblical and theological foundations revealed the spiritual activities that were occurring and the confidence level of members to lead family worship. Goal 1 was considered successful when ten people completed the survey and the responses were analyzed to develop an understanding of current family worship practices of the participants.

The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum on family worship. This curriculum covered basic family worship elements such as prayer, Scripture reading, and singing, while developing a family plan for spiritual development. The six-week curriculum was developed to address the weaknesses demonstrated in the family worship

⁴See appendix 1. 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.

pre-survey responses. This goal was measured by the expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁵ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. If the 90 percent benchmark was not initially met, then the material was revised until it met the standard.

The third goal was to equip families to develop the regular practice of family worship in the home. This class took place on Sunday mornings in Bible study format with one hour of teaching and small group time per meeting. Class participants were expected to complete all homework assignments and engage in class participation. This goal was measured by the participants completing the post-class survey to evaluate any change in the families' level of knowledge, confidence, and motivation to lead family worship in their home.⁶ After the formal teaching time, practical implementation guides were provided to members to practice during the small group breakout time and to take home to engage in family worship times at home. The goal was considered successful when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-class survey scores.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

Family worship. *Family worship* is understood as the “joint worship rendered to God by all the members of one household.”⁷ While this simple definition encapsulates family worship both in and outside of the home, for the sake of this project, three elements are discussed: Scripture reading, prayer, and singing.

⁵ See appendix 2.

⁶ See appendix 1.

⁷ James W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2002), 1.

Three limitations were perceived in relation to this project. The first limitation was relying on the honesty of the current family worship practices and perception indicated by the answers given on the family worship survey. While heavily relying on the honesty of the participants, each contributor was assigned a participant number for the pre- and post-class survey that allowed the results to be compared anonymously. The second limitation rested on the commitment of participants to attend all training sessions. To accurately teach and measure the growth in knowledge and equipping, attendance of all six sessions was required. Prior to the class, participants committed by signing a covenant that they would not miss more than one week, and if a session was missed, the participant would engage in the missed material.⁸ All six sessions were video-recorded and posted on a page that was viewable to all participants while also containing the corresponding handouts. Absent participants were expected to watch the video session while consulting and completing the necessary handouts and expectations. Finally, the last limitation relied on participants accepting the challenge to engage their family in the biblical, theological, and practical principles of family worship.

Four delimitations were addressed in this project. First, participants had to be members in good standing at FBCK.⁹ By limiting the focus of this project to members, evaluation of common thought and approach to family worship practice allowed a more effective evaluation of spiritual practices in the home. A second delimitation was that the class was offered to families with children ten years old and younger. Limiting the participants to those who have younger children assisted in providing biblical, theological, and practical training that had direct influence and immediate implementation for those families. Third, the project was confined to a sixteen-week timeframe. This timeline gave adequate time to prepare and teach the six-week sessions

⁸ See appendix 3.

⁹ Members in good standing are those who regularly attend corporate worship and are actively involved in Sunday school.

and conduct the post-class surveys after curriculum completion. Finally, the project addressed leadership in the home but not in the church. While spiritual leadership in the home includes leading the family to active participation in the church, training did not address church membership practices itself.

Conclusion

God's expectations for the spiritual development of children by the parents is clear. In God's Word, parents are commanded to teach their children to know and love God while realizing that family worship is not an option. The following chapters seek to develop the biblical, theological, and practical foundations to provide a deeper understanding of how to implement family worship practices in one's own church setting. The chapters address three key passages from the Bible which shed light on the development of the family worship curriculum.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF FAMILY WORSHIP

While the commitment to family worship may be similar among evangelical churches, the implementation of or practical application varies. For some, family worship is a means to describing ongoing discipleship practices in the home. To others, it is a formalized set time during the week for spiritual teaching and reflection. Still, to another group among evangelicals, the term and practice of family worship is foreign and unknown. One will not find the term family worship in the Bible but the commands to raise children to fear and live in obedience to God can be found throughout Scripture.

In this project, family worship is used as a term to describe a family's commitment to intentionally engage in knowing the Lord together. Both the Old and New Testament are clear that it is the primary responsibility of parents to train their children in godliness. Scott Brown argues in his book *Theology of the Family* that "if we ever hope to recover the biblical mission of the family, we must restore its worship."¹ He suggests that Christian parents must understand that God created the family as a pivotal part of life in three foundational ways: (1) God made families to bring about structure and roles; (2) the family is the primary vehicle in which children are taught and prepared for various ways of serving churches, communities, and in other nations; and (3) God designed the family to bear witness to Himself, His glory, and the truth of His gospel.² Brown espouses that the family is the foundational element that God designed to influence the creation as

¹ Scott Brown, *A Theology of the Family* (Wake Forest, NC: National Center for Family Integrated Churches, 2016), 45.

² Brown, *A Theology of the Family*, 36.

image bearers of His glory.³ Therefore, if families are the image bearers of the glory of God, then it is of extreme importance that God's design for the family be understood and applied. The evangelical church as a whole primarily focuses on the third responsibility but is often anemic in providing practical application and help to families in accomplishing this task in the home. The lack of practical teaching begs the question, what will the church do to combat the spiritual anemia plaguing so many Christian families?

In this chapter, family worship should be understood as a family's intentional commitment to train children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. God lays the responsibility of discipleship primarily to one's family, mainly the parents. I will highlight a few of these commands in the following Scripture passages: biblical and theological reflection in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, teaching children to hope in God in Psalm 78:1-8, and fathers as the primary teachers in Ephesians 6:1-4.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Nestled as the fifth book in the Old Testament, scholars report Deuteronomy being written around 1400 BC. The setting for Deuteronomy takes place after the Israelites have been set free from Egyptian slavery, having wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Moses, being at the end of his life, is led by God to reemphasize the original Law that God gave at Mount Sinai.⁴ God's law was to be central in the life of an Israelite, especially their king. Speaking of Israel's king, he was to have a copy of the law so that he would learn to fear God. Deuteronomy 17:18 says, "He shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law," which reveals that Moses was providing a copy or a reiteration of original law since there was no new or second law given.⁵ The book of Deuteronomy

³ Brown, *A Theology of the Family*, 36.

⁴ Gerhard Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 61.

⁵ Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976), 17.

had an audience of second generation Israelites at the cusp of being allowed to enter the promised land, thus God reiterated once again His attributes and how He is to be served and worshiped. In giving the reminder of God's expectations for His people, three major themes can be seen in Deuteronomy: God's character, the nature and humanity of Israel, and the way in which the Israelites were to relate to God. First, God reveals His character as a holy redeemer. In reminding the people of God's attributes, Eugene Merrill states that God reveals Himself "in acts, in theophany, and in word."⁶ God specifically chose Israel to be His people (26:5-9), He rescued them from Egyptian bondage (1:30-31; 3:34-39), and will be their ultimate Redeemer. It is within this context that God reveals a desire for a meaningful and holy relationship while providing a clear picture of His holiness, that no one can see God and live (Exod 33:20).

Second, the nature and humanity of Israel is revealed in the expression of God's covenant love. God reminds the people of Israel of who He is, but also reminds them who they are, their unique heritage, and the gift they have received in being God's chosen people. When surveying the attraction to the Israelites, nothing more noble or worthy set them above any other cultures, which God used as a reminder that He alone was the author and founder of the covenant. In his commentary, Peter Craigie writes, "God moved first toward his people in love and they must respond to Him in love. The law of the covenant expresses the love of God and indicates the means by which a man must live to reflect love for God."⁷ With this reminder, the Israelites were instructed to live as an example of God's kingdom at work on earth while modeling His power and work as the only true God.⁸

Third, the book of Deuteronomy reveals how the Israelites were to relate to God. Moses begins by giving a historical review of the covenant, followed with general

⁶ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 48.

⁷ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 37.

⁸ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 51.

stipulations (4:44-11:32), specific stipulations (12:1-26:19), and closes with blessing and curses (27:1-28:68) to reemphasize the unique calling to live holy and righteous lives. These stipulations and the giving of the blessing and curses were a remarkable gift of grace considering how the first generation grumbled and sinned continually against God while in the wilderness (Exod 14:12). In a sense, God was starting a new chapter with the next generation. It was not because of the likeability of this new generation, but points to the gracious and benevolent nature of God in revealing Himself once again, being reminded of the uniqueness of the relationship and that the Israelites were to respond with obedience. In these things, what was true for the Old Testament Israelites remains true for every New Testament believer today, especially for Christian families. God has done all that is necessary to enjoy a relationship with Him while clearly laying out the purpose and expectations of His creation. To know Him and what those expectations are, one must look to the Bible. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 shows that family worship involves biblical and theological reflection.

Commonly known as the Shema, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is a command issued by God for the Israelites to love Him unequivocally and to teach all subsequent generations to do the same. Many Christians have heard this portion of Scripture taught when it comes to raising children, mainly beginning with verses 7-8: “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” At FBCK, this portion of Scripture is taught to every family that desires to participate in the church’s family dedications in which the family stands in front of the congregation and vows to raise their children in the ways of the Lord. Even with this training and focus on calling families to raise children biblically, believers must look to verses 4-6, which state, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, The LORD is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.” Before parents ever hope to teach their children about God,

a parent's own spiritual responsibility must begin with what Moshe Weinfeld calls "a declaration of faith."⁹

Looking to verse 4, one sees the first aspect of this declaration of faith, which is a recognition of God's character: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, The LORD is one." The significance of this verse points to the sovereignty and authority of the LORD and that He is not only God, but their God. The term LORD here refers to Yahweh and speaking of the unique nature of this revelation, theologian Richard D. Nelson states, "Yahweh's oneness signifies a personal integrity that allows for no duplicity in promise or intention. In contrast to the capricious gods of mythic narrative, Yahweh's singleness of will and purpose means absolute dependability."¹⁰ This statement from God about Himself is significant as He clearly denounces the falsehood of pagan rituals and pagan gods meanwhile declaring that He alone is the one true God. To avoid being confused, God is not revealing his primacy as first among gods, but as the one and only God.

In giving of the Ten Commandments, Yahweh communicated that Israel was to have no other gods but Yahweh (Exod 20:3). Having one god was unique in a culture of paganism that worshiped many deities and to serve one God would have been considered absurd. God is unique and distinct from all other pagan religions and actively reveals and engages with His followers, leaving them informed as to how to please Him; something other gods and religions lacked. Understanding that God is sovereign, omniscient, and omnipotent in all things is key for the believer to know God and respond according to His will. Family worship practices are not derived from the finiteness of one's own mind, but from God's Word with an understanding that He alone is God, and, while He is righteous, has revealed Himself in a personal way that His followers might know and understand Him. In family worship, the task is to know and teach about God

⁹ Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-1*, The Anchor Bible Series, vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 328.

¹⁰ Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 89.

according to His revealed Word, not what one thinks or wishes Him to be that is contrary to the Scriptures.

Following Moses's call to know the uniqueness and oneness of Yahweh, the response to this truth is revealed in Deuteronomy 6:5: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is a personal call to every Israelite to love God in these specific ways. These three elements of love—heart, soul, and might—are the litmus test to prove one's love for God. Daniel Block helpfully interprets these three elements as heart, being, and resources.¹¹ To love God in this context is much different from the meaning of love today. For example, I love my wife and children, I love college football, and I love a good meat-lovers pizza. However, I do not love my wife and children in the same way that I love college football. It is important to note that loving God is not superficial or based on what one receives from the relationship. It is a covenantal love based on obedience, which recognizes God's loving-kindness, power, and character. To love God with the heart is not solely based on how one feels, but with the intellect as well.¹² The Israelites were also commanded to love God with their soul, that is, one's entire being. Merrill argues that the soul "refers to the invisible part of the individual, the person qua person including the will and sensibilities."¹³

Not only is one to love God with the mind and in all actions and dealings, but with all their strength. At first glance, one might think this refers to the use of physical strength. That is certainly one application, but it has more to do with using the strength of one's resources: time, talent, and treasure. In the Old Testament context, one's resources of home, livestock, and family were all to be offered to glorify God as a testimony of love for Him. Loving God was to be with one's intellect, not just knowing but loving Him

¹¹ Daniel Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 102.

¹² Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 164.

¹³ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 165.

through actions of the will, and by recognizing one's resources as God's gift and thereby using those gifts to glorify Him. These three elements comprise how God defines obedience.

How important is it to love God in these ways? One cannot dismiss the great meaning of this text. In fact, when Jesus was being questioned by the Sadducees about the greatest commandment in the gospel of Matthew 22:37, He quoted this very verse while following up with another Old Testament reference regarding one's love for their neighbor (Lev 19:18). Jesus said of both of these that the whole law and the Prophets hinge on keeping these two commandments (Matt 22:40).

As parents, one's love for God and devotional times spent in Bible study are tantamount and should precede times of family worship for one cannot teach or lead if not prepared to do so. To lead families to love and worship God, it is foundational for parents to know God's design for obedience, which is to love Him with all heart, soul, and strength, and to do so recognizing Him as the only source of and provider of these elements. By growing in knowledge and outward obedience, parents can truly teach and lead their children in the ways of the Lord. Knowing God intimately informs what one knows, thereby fueling what and how one disciplines their children. It is important to note that perfection is not the standard here. There was only one who was perfect that walked this earth, Jesus, and none of us are Him. We are incapable of loving and teaching our children perfectly, and that is why all parents can do is ask the Lord for His wisdom and strength as they seek to glorify Him through the vehicle of the family unit. They should take comfort that God is known for making the fool wise. God shows tremendous grace and it is important that parents be gracious to themselves and each other while striving to bring those entrusted to their care in the wisdom of God.

Having addressed the intimate individual nature of loving God, Moses addresses the importance of teaching children to love God in these same ways in verse 7: "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house,

and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” God, through Moses, commands parents, the leaders of the family, to teach God’s statutes with intentionality and disciplined diligence. What are parents to teach their children? They are to teach the oneness of God and what it means to love Him in all places and at all times.¹⁴ It is interesting to note that spiritually-focused conversations did not only occur during formal times, but throughout the day: at home, outside, and going to sleep or waking up clearly articulated in the passage: sitting and walking, lying, and rising (6:7). As an Israelite being responsible over children, God’s covenant and proper response was to be discussed all day, every day; not just in the formal setting, but in the normal schedule of life and was to be held as the ultimate value and holy responsibility or calling in both parent and child.¹⁵

Not only is there a personal and family unit level of teaching and living in obedience, but there is also a communal aspect. Verses 8-9 say, “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Samuel R. Driver comments that these physical reminders were to “serve as an ever-present memorial to the Israelite of his relationship to Jehovah and of the debt of gratitude which he owes him.”¹⁶ Not only did these outward signs remind the Israelite of one’s relationship with God, but also acted as an outward sign to the community of one’s commitment to love God thereby creating a tremendous community of accountability.¹⁷ Eventually, this became a stumbling block and led to pious arrogance. However, God’s desire for this command was to remember

¹⁴ Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6A (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 142.

¹⁵ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

¹⁶ Samuel R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, The International Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), 92.

¹⁷ Block, *For the Glory of God*, 115.

Him as their God and His blessings, which would propel them to right living according to His commands.

While Christians today do not walk around with the Scriptures plastered between their eyes, the application remains: God's Word is to dwell so richly within us (Col 3:16) that no matter where we go or what we do, it is to impact our every word and deed. Christian families also need Christian community and fellowship with other believers for encouragement and accountability. In Hebrews, Christians are commanded to not forsake the gathering of believers (10:25) and are to stir one another to love and good works (10:24-25). For families to instruct children to love the Lord, the parents must first know and love God, and He must be the ultimate priority. That relationship then overflows into the ability to teach and model such wisdom and behavior; however, it is not to be left in the privacy of one's home but is to be seen in the marketplace and strengthened by the church and fellowship with other believers. The problem is that the family has inadvertently reversed God's original design for family discipleship and has turned this role over to the church. Therefore, the church has become the primary life and doctrinal teacher and little biblical conversation occurs in the home outside of church gatherings.

The Shema should be an encouragement to all Christian families who take family worship seriously by providing a beautiful reminder that God has revealed Himself and not left His people without understanding. Leading family worship and teaching children about God and how to love Him is a high and difficult calling, not because God has made it difficult, but because of our own sinfulness and desire to magnify self over God. Throughout this ministry project, my desire is for more parents in FBCK to understand their true calling as followers of Christ and in each meeting, I pray we will not be defined by just how much we know about God, but our example in loving our spouses, children, and those around us for the glory of God.

Psalm 78:1-8

In addressing the entirety of Israel regarding the true state of the nation, the Psalmist recalls the historical sins people have committed against God and offers the formula to avoid such atrocities in the future; that is, to teach the next generation the sins of the past generation and to place their hope in God alone.¹⁸ If Christian homes are to honor the Lord, then it is imperative that parents be honest and transparent about the presence and curse of sin globally, but also how sin affects the life of parents individually as well. Doing so can lead to these children knowing that God is their only hope and they will be faithful to God by keeping His commandments. Artur Weiser states that what this psalm

wants to portray and impress on the mind is rather “the riddles of from of old” or, as we would say today, the irrational quality of the things that have come to pass, in order that present and coming generations will bear in mind and never forget the revelation of God’s nature and will, together with the nature of human sin; simultaneously they are admonished to be faithful and obedient and warned against unfaithfulness and fickleness, so that this knowledge will be preserved as a living force, as the holy tradition of God’s covenant.¹⁹

As Weiser correctly identifies, humanity is unable to do what is necessary, what is right. Parents certainly cannot make their children love the Lord, but what is reinforced is that God has provided all that is necessary for parents to fulfill their biblical, God-given role as the spiritual leaders in the home.

The employment of godly wisdom first comes from knowing and heeding the Word of God. The call to Israel in the Shema began with a call for Israel to “hear.” In the same way and command, Psalm 78:1 reads, “Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!” The psalmist is instructing the Israelites much like a teacher does with students. Christian parents are the spiritual teachers and the informers of their children’s spirituality. In Psalm 78:2-4, the teacher reveals the content of the teaching: “I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark saying from of old,

¹⁸ Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 287.

¹⁹ Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 78.

things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonder what he has done.” Robert G. Bratcher contends that the usage of parable here translated as “wise sayings and dark sayings” can be translated “wise sayings and riddles.”²⁰ If one is to understand these riddles, it is imperative the listener hear correctly and attentively.²¹

Israel is not a nation known for loving God with all the heart, soul, and strength. Much of the Bible clearly demonstrates the lack of faith and trust Israel had in God. Here the Psalmist shows a lack of concern for the dark history, really, a lack of faithfulness his ancestors had in God and exhorts the people to commit to the sharing of their ancestors’ unfaithfulness toward the Lord to their children and subsequent generations while teaching that the Lord had remained faithful. The Psalmist takes the focus from the sinfulness of the previous generations and saw that the thread running through it all was God’s continued faithfulness in upholding His covenant. By no means does this negate the sin of the generations prior, but it communicated the gracious, benevolent nature of the God who had chosen them to be His people. Therefore, he states in verse 4: “Tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders he has done” (Ps 78:4).

Verses 2-4 should be a reminder for all believers that even though the battle with sin continues, it is important to not lose sight of the kindness, grace, mercy, and long-suffering of God. Just because God remains faithful to His people does not mean that sin is willingly accepted and swept under the rug since it is all paid for in Christ. Speaking to the Christians in Rome, Paul said, “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” (Rom 6:1-2). Christians do not accept their sin willingly but continue to battle against it in the power of Christ while also

²⁰ Robert G. Bratcher, *A Handbook on Psalms* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 681.

²¹ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150, A Continental Commentary*, trans. Hilton Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 125.

living knowing that sin has been defeated through Christ's death and resurrection, and will one day be completely eradicated when Christ sets up His eternal kingdom. The best example parents can give to their children is to admit when they sin, seek forgiveness, and to be genuine and honest when it comes to the difficulties in life. It is important to keep conversations age appropriate, but children need parents to be transparent so that they can see how their parents navigate difficult decisions and trials as followers of Christ. While confessing sin to children, it is equally important to highlight the goodness and sustaining power of the Lord showcased through the gift of grace. The purpose of these things is to remember who and what the Lord has done and is doing. Like this Psalm, it is not simply teaching historical facts but, as Erhard S. Gerstenberger says, highlights "present faith in the light of a few historical situations."²²

The Psalmist in verse 5 gives a specific example of the wonders God has done: God established a testimony in Jacob and gave the Law in Israel in which he commanded for the generations to teach their children. God's commandments and teaching are to be the topic of conversation among God's people, especially in the home. Expounding on the importance of commandment and tradition, Marvin Tate suggests that "commandments are understood in the context of the story and the story is incomplete with the commandments. Only by understanding the old traditions can the present generation avoid repeating the sins of the previous ones."²³ The purpose in sharing stories and filtering it through the commandments is two-fold and is found in verses 7 through 8: "So that they (children) should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God but keep his commandments and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God."

²² Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2 and Lamentations*, The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, vol. 15 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 93.

²³ Tate, *Psalm 51-100*, 289.

Parents want to pass on what they love or value. In today's culture, parents want to pass down a love for sports, hunting, gardening, knitting, cooking, and many other things. They hope that their children develop an interest in activities like they do and thereby share the same love and experiences. This is not an evil or bad thing, it is an inherent God-given quality. Oftentimes, the teaching, modeling, and time spent investing in such a love is not focused on a child's spiritual formation. That is why they go to church on Sunday and Wednesdays—so that the pastors and leaders can invest in them in that way. The issue is that such a time at church is limited and cannot compete with the other types of interests being shared and encouraged at home outside of love for Jesus. This is not to say that families cannot have other interests, but what must be primary is the recognition of the Lord as God and that the family loves Him through obedience. Parents are the ones who set this priority and model this behavior.

In this project, I do not doubt that parents know what God expects of them and how they are to train their children. What concerns me is that the home does not appear to be the center for spiritual training, which suggests a disconnect between knowing and applying. It is my hope that the participants who go through the family worship training will make the connection with knowing God and His Word, valuing it as the ultimate priority followed by a deep commitment to teaching, applying, modeling this priority in the home daily. The purpose is that the children will hope in God and not forget who He is and how He acts but live in obedience; that they might not repeat how the Israelites lived faithless lives, but today's children would be faithful to know God, honor Him, not just with their lips but with their very lives.²⁴ Verse 8 is a warning to the Israelites less they become like their fathers; faithless to God.²⁵

²⁴ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Francis Bolton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1871), 2:364.

²⁵ Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909), 182.

In this project, each parent during their family worship time in the home will document instances when they had to ask forgiveness from their child and express their sin nature and need for Jesus's forgiveness and grace in their life. The specificity of the action that required forgiveness will not be shared, but a clear response that leads to sharing the tenets of the gospel of sin and God's grace and forgiveness in Christ should be elaborated on. Every individual who goes through the family worship curriculum at FBCK will not only grow in the biblical understanding of family discipleship, but also that their love for God and willingness to live in humility before their family and friends for the purpose of spiritual maturity will be strengthened.

If those who participate in the family worship submit to the authority of God's Word and expectations of believers in the home, then wisdom will be given by God and homes will begin to be transformed into God-glorifying, Christ-centered homes that focus on loving God as of utmost importance. That love and devotion will feed into every area of life: school, work, home, and at church. James 1:5-8 reads,

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Parenting is hard enough and culture today suggests that spiritual parenting should be left to the theological scholars of the church—those who have seminary degrees. That is not how God created the family to operate and not why He saved us, gave us His Word, and the Holy Spirit. The Bible says that “His divine power has granted us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to His own glory and excellence” (2 Pet 1:3). If Christians seek God and His wisdom through Bible study, prayer, and singing, in conjunction with going to church for fellowship and accountability, He promises to lead and meet the needs of His children. I desire for the participants at FBCK to know that God has promised to honor Himself in the lives of families, but He will not do so if a personal relationship with Him is not prioritized and a sure and

steadfast commitment to lead transparent lives. Yes, He will bless, but personal investment is required.

Ephesians 6:1-4

In Paul's epistle to the Ephesian Christians he highlights that humanity finds its purpose being unified in Christ, which finds its outward expression in the corporate nature of the church.²⁶ Not only does humanity find its purpose in the local church, but in the unity of relationships in the home as well. For Paul, unity is achieved when people love one another, which appears to be a dominant theme in his writing to Ephesus. It is important for Christians to know that God desires unity within the church and in Christian homes and relationships. Because God is the Creator of all things, He is also the Creator of the family. Being Creator of all things including the family, God reserves the right to assign the various roles and purposes for each created element. God designed the family to be shepherded by the father, and with sin's entrance into the world and humanity's propensity to love sin over God, the role man was to fill quickly became diluted. Ephesians 6 displays a beautiful picture of proper male headship and serves as a tremendous admonition to the people of FBCK to actively join the effort in training the next generation to know and love the Lord as men step up and lead their families in word and deed. Ephesians 6:1-4 calls fathers to be the primary family worship leaders in the home, a task that each father of FBCK is called to and has been given the tools for succeeding in.

A closer look into the unity that is to be present within a Christian family reveals the relationship between children and parents. First, the responsibility of children to obey. Second, the motivation is based on a command from the Old Testament. Last, Paul addresses the role a father is to have in the family. Paul begins in Ephesians 6:1 by stating, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." The instructions Paul addresses to children are just like the exhortation he delivers to the Christians at Colossae, saying,

²⁶ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 98.

“Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord” (Col 3:20). The apostle Paul is clear that children are to obey their parents in everything, for it is right, good, and pleases the Lord. While he is writing to Christians, it is important for one to not assume that every parent is a Christian in every home. Commenting on virtue within the ancient home, Charles H. Talbert states, “In the Mediterranean world obedience to parents was the chief virtue of children. This was true for pagans, Jews, and Christians alike.”²⁷ It is important to note that Paul has not added to this saying that children are to obey their parents so much as they are Christians. One does not find that in the Scripture; therefore, children are to obey their parents regardless of whether or not their parents are Christians.

In his commentary, Harold Hoehner highlights that the larger picture of these four verses deals with living the Christian life wisely through understanding God’s will so that the union between parents and children can be achieved.²⁸ Here in verse 1, parents are grouped together and the children are separate. A second valuable note is that children are to obey their parents in the Lord. According to Andrew T. Lincoln, these children are accepted as part of the Christian community and therefore are held to a standard of Christian obedience because it honors the Lord, honors the parents, and is what God has commanded.²⁹ For a child, the motivation for obeying one’s parents comes from a desire to obey the Lord. Therefore, in obeying the Lord a child will respect and obey the parents. From a young age, children are taught right from wrong and that which honors and dishonors the Lord. In his commentary on Ephesians, F. F. Bruce helpfully comments that a young child does not need to have confessed faith in Christ to honor his parents in

²⁷ Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 144.

²⁸ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 785.

²⁹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 403.

this way, but once that child is a Christian, he is given the Holy Spirit, which enables the believer to live in obedience to Christ, meaning there is no excuse for a born-again child to disobey his parents as long as the parents are not asking the child to engage in an activity that would conflict with the duty of being in the Lord.³⁰

Not only are children called to obey their parents, but verses 2-3 say to “honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise) that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land” (Eph 6:2-3). In the giving of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, the command to honor one’s father and mother is the fifth commandment. While being the fifth commandment, it is the first commandment to carry with it a promise: “That your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you” (Exod 20:12). Using the Old Testament Ten Commandments, Paul strengthens his argument for the necessity of children obeying their parents. While there is dispute among scholars regarding the particulars of the promise, it is clear that obeying one’s parents brings honor while disobedience dishonors parents. Hoehner points out that children obeying or disobeying does not just bring honor or dishonor to one parent, but to both.³¹ There is a correlation here: what honors God is what will always honor parents.

When previously looking at Deuteronomy, the importance of knowing God’s attributes and character were discussed at length. For children to know what it means to obey in a way that honors God, parents must be the primary teachers and examples. Children will learn not just by what is taught, but also by how they see their parents live. They learn respect, submission, humility, pride, callousness, anger, and servanthood all from the parents first and foremost. Second and most important, parents must know that their children are sinners. They are sinners by birth and by nature. They need to be taught right and wrong, good and evil, and the concept of sin and righteousness. The Bible

³⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 178.

³¹ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 788.

explains these things in great detail. God has not left the parents uninformed, but it is the parents' job to train their children biblically so that the child may honor the Lord and that the parents will not be dishonored by disobedience.

It is my hope that through the family worship class offered at FBCK, the participants will know God's Word well enough to live lives that are pleasing to God and to be examples of Christ in their homes. However, it is not enough to know and be an example; I want parents to have the knowledge that enables them to teach their children about godly living and righteous responses so that both parents and the children have the framework to build relationships that are healthy, God-centered, and fruit-bearing.

In verse 4, Paul transitions from the children's relationship to the parents to, ultimately, the role of the father and his relationship with the children. Paul says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4). Speaking of the ancient world, Lincoln writes, "In both Greco-Roman and Jewish writings, it is fathers in particular who are held responsible for the education of the children, make it far more likely that Ephesians is in conformity with this way of thinking."³² Paul makes it clear that the expectation is for fathers to take the reins in raising their children. Two commands are seen. The first command has a negative connotation: do not provoke them to anger. During the time of this writing, the father had ultimate authority, much like the king of a monarchy, and the use of force to achieve certain behaviors was viewed as acceptable. Paul combats that notion with the idea of starting a new practice of no longer provoking them to anger. The ongoing anger, frustration, and practice of nagging provoke children to anger, which is a sin, for the Bible says that "the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (Jas 1:20). The father is to promote godliness in the home, not be the reason for increasing his children's sin account. Following the negative connotation, Paul provides the father with the positive command to bring them up in the Lord through discipline and instruction. This is a strong

³² Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 406.

contrast from the destruction caused from tearing down one's child that is reversed to that of a nurturer.

Bringing a child up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord does not mean that they cease to sin or that the father overlooks sinful behavior. The term "admonish" may be described as "encouragement or reproof but usually implies that there is some difficulty or problem in the attitude or behavior of those receiving the admonition that needs to be resolved or some opposition to be overcome."³³ Discipline and instruction in a child's life are needed to continue to point them toward righteousness and fulfill the will of God so that the child would know that sinful living brings about consequences and therefore they would learn to make choices that are holy and right in the sight of God.³⁴ The role of the father is to teach and instruct his children in the way that God teaches and instructs His children. He should lead humbly by actively engaging the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal 5:22-23). This training comes from the Lord because it is prescribed by Him through fathers. Hoehner beautifully articulates the need for fathers to rely upon God for this tremendous task: "Fathers must rely on the Holy Spirit to temper their conduct and attitude, thus enabling them to avoid provoking their children to anger. Also, the Holy Spirit gives them the wisdom and enablement they need to train and instruct."³⁵

All parents, but especially fathers, should find their motives in teaching and disciplining their children to glorify God and to encourage Christ-honoring living in their children. Even believers are still sinful and so if they are being honest, it is sometimes more expedient to correct children in an unrighteous way that in turn causes them to sin by burning with anger toward the parents. Fathers should care about if they make their

³³ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 408.

³⁴ S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), 510.

³⁵ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 799.

children sin intentionally, especially when it is the father's fault. It is a constant sinful and selfish battle that to fight, but Christian fathers must instead fill their hearts and minds with the Word of God, and by faith allow the Spirit to transform and lead in what is right and good. May men of God adopt a biblical approach to the disciplining and instructing of their children through the family worship class. In a culture that is confused about manhood and fatherhood, may this study bring transformation in families and in the life of the church as we adopt and live by God's Word.

Conclusion

God's Word is clear regarding the biblical and theological principles supporting family worship, also known as family discipleship. At its core, three primary passages were considered and explored, which establish the foundation for the family worship curriculum of this project. The reward will be that participants that complete the family worship study will realize that no one is responsible for their personal love and obedience to Christ except for them, and as one who takes this relationship serious, they will seek to teach their children what it means to be faithful to God, and fathers will courageously stand up, stop taking a back seat, and lead their families to love and serve the Lord. To accomplish this, each session of the family worship curriculum must be centered around God's Word in family discipleship.

Second, in studying the Psalmist's call to teach the next generation hope in God and to not be unfaithful and repeat their father's mistakes, it is also clear that families must be honest about their past failures, being sure to highlight the character of God: His goodness, grace, long-suffering, and mercy. Participants will be challenged to let go of pride and to instead live a life of transparency around their family members. This will require parents to ask forgiveness of one another and from their kids when they make mistakes. The goal is to increase conversations about the sin we battle while highlighting the even greater gift in Christ who has defeated sin. For the six weeks of each class, participants will be moved to smaller breakout groups to discuss struggles and fears with

other families. Through this community, it will be most beneficial for everyone to have a community-based structure during the sessions.

Last, in Ephesians, Paul instructed the church that children are to obey their parents as a means of glorifying the Lord and for fathers to not be the cause for their children's sin, but to raise them in the Lord. In the context of this ministry project, my desire is to train men to know who God is, what pleases Him, and the variations of His responses based on righteousness and unrighteous, thereby making the connection that earthly fathers need to be a mirror of the Heavenly Father in their expectations and how they discipline. The Lord has given everything needed to know and honor Him, but there is still the human responsibility that believers have to do the work to know Him by reading, studying, and applying His Word. Therefore, my ambition is for the people of FBCK to be such lovers of God's Word that it would cause a spiritual renewal in our church and a spiritual awakening in the community.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES
RELATED TO FAMILY WORSHIP

Family worship practices vary family to family. This chapter presents the theories and practices of three theologians who have provided great assistance to Christian families regarding the engagement of family worship in the home. Each of the family worship elements presented will be used to inform the development of the six-week family worship curriculum that will be implemented at FBCK. While these surveyed theologians are orthodox in their doctrine, each one shines a light on family worship in a unique way that provides a more complete understanding of the practice.

Theologians J. W. Alexander, Donald S. Whitney, and Joel R. Beeke have written vastly on the biblical pattern of family worship. These three theologians have been chosen carefully as representatives of modern scholarship from the reformed evangelical community, which aligns most closely with the beliefs of FBCK. Using the theology and insight of these authors, participants will quickly find understanding and familiarity of terms and ideas which will encourage the learning process of the participants. Alexander, a nineteenth-century Princetonian, along with Beeke and Whitney, who are both seminary professors and accomplished writers, teachers, and presenters, are well-educated in the field of family worship and provide incredible insight on the subject. In fact, Alexander seems to have influenced both Beeke and Whitney in their assertions regarding family worship since both authors cite Alexander's work on family worship in their writings. Each theologian, though similar in doctrine and in agreement of the three main elements of family worship, brings out unique and helpful aspects about how to read the Bible, pray, and sing, which works to develop quite a mature view of family worship when all three are surveyed. After each theologian's methodology is presented, I will compare

their conclusions to articulate the essential elements of family worship to inform the family worship practices of FBCK.

J. W. Alexander's Essential Elements of Family Worship

James Waddel Alexander was the son of a Presbyterian minister and professor of Princeton Theological Seminary. After his conversion in 1820, he entered Princeton Seminary in 1822 and was licensed for ministry in 1825. In 1833, he was appointed Professor of Rhetoric and Belles-lettres in the College of New Jersey, but his greatest passion was being a pastor, serving various Presbyterian churches until his death in 1859. Alexander is well known for his books and English translation of the hymn *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*, which was popularized in nineteenth and twentieth century hymnals. Published in 1847, Alexander penned *Thoughts on Family Worship*, which has been used to influence many scholars' writings on family worship in addition to being used of the Lord to encourage a biblical renewal of the purpose of the family and time spent in the home. Alexander espouses that prayer, Scripture reading, and psalmody are essential elements of family worship.

Alexander submits that prayer is the most essential aspect of the worshipping family and should be offered communally by those who live in the same house as they approach God as a family.¹ During the time of prayer, all things domestic may be brought before the Lord. There should be two fixed times of family prayer: morning and evening. He bases this practice on Psalm 55:15: "Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice." Alexander points out that there is no magic formula here but a natural rhythm found in the Bible in which one acknowledges God at the start and end of the day. During family worship prayer time he suggests that morning prayer should be early in the morning to feed the soul before feeding the physical body. Also, by waking early to engage in morning prayer, one can avoid the busyness and

¹ James W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2002), 110.

distractions that often come during the day. At the close of day when time for evening prayer, he encourages families to pray right before going to bed. Thus, a family would begin and close their day with prayer.

When offering prayers, brevity, simplicity, and intelligibility should also be on the mind of the one offering the family prayer, suggesting that leading the prayer is placing words in the mouths of children, espousing that this is the model seen within the Psalms and throughout the Bible.² Family prayer is not a time for long and unintelligible prayers, Alexander says, as it promotes the deadening and hardening of one's heart. Prayers should be brief and intelligible, clear, intentional, and filled with zeal. Alexander admits that a regular time of family prayer can result in a laborious routine and suggests that family prayer be varied. A proponent of offering prayers that are helped by the Spirit, that is, non-prescribed or pre-written prayers, Alexander submits that he would rather families pray with the help of prescribed prayer than to disregard prayer completely. He suggests the use of the Book of Common Prayer, which has a *Form of Prayers*. Closing his argument for family prayer, he greatly warns the reader to beware turning this time into a cold ritual that leads to an emptiness. One last instruction he gives to the one leading prayer is that the correct posture for family prayer is that of kneeling.³

The next element in Alexander's theory on family worship practice is the reading of Scripture. This element is best articulated in Deuteronomy 6:7-9 when God said to the Israelites, "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." God expected the children of Israel to teach God's statutes all day and every

² Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 114.

³ Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 116.

day. They were to be reminded of His Word and remind one another of how to know and obey God. Alexander submits that the reading of God’s Word as family must be a daily occurrence, regardless of a child’s age.⁴ As to what part of the Bible should be read, he responds saying that the whole counsel of God should be read to the family. Not in one sitting of course, but over time. Not only should all of Scripture be read, but Alexander encourages parents to avoid omitting any portion of the biblical record that contain difficult interpretations or graphic stories. He goes a step further suggesting that parents should read one chapter in the New Testament in the morning and one chapter in the Old Testament in the evening.⁵ When the time comes to interpret or explain the passage that is read, he encourages the head of the family who is reading to only attempt to explain that which he is most comfortable and able to do. Alexander highlights that a primary portion of family worship is reading the Scripture, not the exposition. If the head of the house would like to expound on the Word of God, then he should consult orthodox commentaries such as Matthew Henry’s commentaries.⁶

Not only should the entire Bible be read in its fullness and explained wisely, but Alexander asserts the way one reads the Bible is of great concern: “Half its meaning, and almost all its effect, are sometimes suffocated and lost by a sleepy, monotonous, stupid, careless, and inarticulate, drawling, or what is worse, an affected delivery.”⁷ Quoting 1 Peter 1:24-25 which says, “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass wither and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever,” Alexander submits that if any book is to be read with excitement, it should be the eternal Word of God.⁸ The reading of God’s Word is of primary importance in the

⁴ Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 119.

⁵ Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 120.

⁶ Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 121.

⁷ Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 123.

⁸ Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 126.

household worship of the family.

The final aspect in Alexander's family worship practice is the use of Psalmody. Stating that it is the duty of every believer to praise the Lord by singing publicly in the church, it is just as important to sing the Lord's praises in the home. If a congregation can sing praises to the Lord, so can a family. Supporting this claim, Alexander asserts that a family is a domestic congregation, or a church in the house.⁹ The importance of Psalmody finds its value as an additional means of Christian instruction. Using Colossians 3:16 which says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in your richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord," Alexander highlights the important didactic teaching element of singing not just in the corporate church gathering, but in the home as well. When selecting music to sing, he instructs that repetition is very important, so a smaller repertoire of psalms and hymns is better than having an extensive collection of sacred music. Doing so allows the melody and doctrine within the song text to become not only familiar, but understood.¹⁰ He encourages parents with young children to support and champion the singing of their children in the home, believing that a revival in psalmody would also contribute to the singing in the congregation.

Not only does he encourage all ages to sing in the home, but to the father, Alexander provides certain guides in giving direction for what songs should be chosen to sing in the house. Alexander believed it was of utmost value to find songs that were true and contained an appropriate level for understanding for the father's little flock so that their hearts could be lifted to God.¹¹ Songs for family worship must be chosen with wisdom and intentionality. Closing with a warning, Alexander says, "It is an offense to God to address

⁹ Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 128.

¹⁰ Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 129.

¹¹ Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 133.

Him in words of high moment while, perhaps, we have no thought of their meaning.”¹²

The head of the household has an important role when selecting songs to sing that are doctrinally true and age-appropriate so that the family might render proper praise to God with heart and mind (1 Cor 14:15). Psalmody is an essential daily aspect of family worship and not only will benefit the home, but it will increase awareness and joy of singing in the corporate gathering as well.

In the same way, my desire for the families at FBCK is to know God’s purpose and design for the family and how family worship aligns with His plan so that homes might be deepened and strengthened for glory of Christ. While the Family Worship Survey will reveal current practices of the families, many are not currently practicing family worship regularly in the home. Implementing Alexander’s three elements of family worship in my curriculum will enable desired goals to be met throughout the six weeks of sessions.

Donald S. Whitney’s Essential Elements of Family Worship

Donald S. Whitney, author of *Family Worship* and eight other books including his notable work, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, currently serves as Professor of Biblical Spirituality at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He is a sought-after public speaker and has served in ministry for over twenty years. In Whitney’s family worship plan, he includes three essential elements of family worship: read, pray, and sing. For families who have developed a regular time of reading, praying, and singing, he suggests the addition of catechisms, Scripture memory, and other books for variety.

The first essential element of family worship practice is reading the Bible. Western culture widely rejects the notion that there is objective truth; rather, it endorses that truth is relative. Therefore, what may be true for one person may not be true for another. The Bible, however, says that God’s Word is true; in fact, Jesus Himself testified

¹² Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 134.

to its truthfulness (John 17:17). Furthermore, Jesus said of Himself that He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Whitney clearly and boldly submits to families that a primary aspect of family worship must be the reading of God’s Word, for it is what he calls the “centerpiece of family worship.”¹³ He says a family should work to read through the entire Bible chapter by chapter, not just the portions in Scripture that are more enjoyable or less frightening. He suggests using narrative passages or reading from shorter sections for younger children, but as they mature recommends expanding reading to the entire New Testament, with the ultimate goal of reading the entire Bible.¹⁴ If the content of family worship is the Bible, Whitney advises that the reading of Scripture should be approached with enthusiasm, for it is God-breathed and is an exciting, life-changing book. What could be more exciting than to read a letter from God? Not only should it be read with anticipation and excitement, but parents should be prepared to explain words or concepts that will be part of the daily reading. Whitney is a major proponent on keeping preparations and implementation of family worship simple, yet reveals the importance of preparation, stating that some intentionality is required to become familiar with the Scripture text beforehand so that family worship times will be led with purpose.¹⁵ He explains that it is the role of the head of the household, but certainly every parent and family, to begin family worship with a time of reading the Bible.

The second essential element of family worship is prayer. After completing the Bible reading, Whitney advises the family worship leader to use the selected passage of

¹³ Donald S. Whitney, *Simplify Your Spiritual Life: Spiritual Disciplines for the Overwhelmed* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2003), 175.

¹⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Family Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 44.

¹⁵ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 45.

Scripture previously read to guide the family in a time of prayer.¹⁶ Prayer can be offered by the head of the household, which is usually the father, someone of his choosing, or each member of the family may take turns offering prayers to the Lord. Whitney stresses that it is most important that the family prays together.¹⁷ Many families keep a prayer list containing specific family-related concerns while also including requests outside the family for friends, missionaries, and church. Whatever happens during prayer time, it is important to have a plan and to approach this time with intentionality. Whitney says that keeping a prayer list to pray over those concerns is a wonderful idea, and he strongly encourages families to include in the time of prayer a moment where they pray for at least one specific element from the Bible reading that just occurred. As a guide, he suggests that families read through the Psalms and when it comes time to pray, the one voicing the prayer will work through one verse at a time praying it back to God. There is no need to pray the entire Psalm, but working through a few verses through prayer is quite profitable. To provide an example, Whitney highlights Psalm 23 where after reading the first verse one would thank God for being a shepherd, a provider, a sustainer, and so on as they work through the text.¹⁸ The focus of family prayer time, Whitney points out, is not just to offer family petitions to the Lord, but to highlight God's character and nature. Doing so places the focus on God first before a family jumps to their concerns. Whitney asserts that family worship is not just the transmission of facts, but parents leading by example and teaching them to pray each time a prayer is offered.¹⁹ Using the Bible to inform family prayer lists is a major component of family worship.

The third element of family worship Whitney asserts is singing. He suggests picking up a song book for everyone in the family like a hymnbook, or putting together a

¹⁶ Whitney, *Simplify Your Spiritual Life*, 175.

¹⁷ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 45.

¹⁸ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 45.

¹⁹ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 46.

small collection of songs that the family could sing. Consulting with a pastor or worship pastor on what songs would be appropriate doctrinally and musically, and age-appropriate, would assist in this venture. Whitney recalls that the second-century church father, Tertullian, reported that the church prayed together, instructed one another, and sang together.²⁰ For this time to be God-honoring, it does not have to be offered through the talents of the musical elite only but every member of the family in every family household can and should participate in the singing of God's praises. Whitney suggests singing a cappella, pulling up a song recording on an electronic device, or if there are instrumentalists in the home, having them accompany according to ability and skill.²¹ If families question how much to sing, Whitney suggests that families sing as much or as little as needed to encourage the practice of singing in the home. If one verse is all that happens, great, but if all verses of a song are sung, that is great too. The goal is to make singing the Lord's praises an important aspect of the gathered family time, so keep it light and enjoyable.

While Whitney says reading the Bible, prayer, and singing are essential for family worship, he goes beyond these elements to provide families with additional thoughts for those who wish to dig deeper. If schedule allows, he encourages the use of three additional elements: catechisms, Scripture memory, and reading other books as a family.²²

If possible, Whitney suggests catechizing one's children. He defines *catechism* as "a question-and-answer approach to teaching biblical doctrine."²³ Essentially, it teaches important doctrinal truths and concepts using words and phrases that are appropriate for children to learn and memorize. Whitney suggests talking to a pastor for recommendations on catechisms or use the internet to find credible resources. Not only is the use of

²⁰ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 29.

²¹ Whitney, *Simplify Your Spiritual Life*, 175.

²² Whitney, *Family Worship*, 48-49.

²³ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 48.

catechisms a helpful way to increase spiritual maturity, but Whitney asserts that memorizing Scripture as a family is extremely beneficial. Families can either rehearse a selected memory verse they are working on together or use a verse or verses that family members have memorized separately. How Scripture is memorized is completely up to each family. Whitney suggests looking into one's local church to see if resources for Scripture memory are already published and available. If the church does not have those resources, then are the children studying a particular verse in Sunday school or other program at church? If so, parents can help by learning and reviewing that verse during family worship time. How should a family learn Scripture if there is no aid? Whitney leaves it up to the family. They can take one verse per month or adopt a long-term project to memorize a larger section of Scripture. There is a tremendous amount of flexibility with the overarching goal being to know and learn more Scripture (Col 3:16).

Whitney's final addition to family worship is choosing to read a book together at the end of this dedicated time. Christian fiction or biographies are great additions to this time. Children love to read, they need to read, and need to be read to. It can be difficult to squeeze in regular reading time and family worship in the evening, so combining reading time into family worship time can simplify the schedule.²⁴

In reading the Word of God, praying, singing, and if time permits, adding the catechisms, Scripture memory, and additional reading, Whitney encourages families to develop a realistic goal of reserving ten minutes of family worship time each night and if you have more time, great, if less time is needed, great. The important aspect of family worship is that you are being intentional, gathering regularly at the same time, whether it be morning or evening, and that families be flexible and provide themselves and their children with grace when it is not perfect. Whitney says the bottom line is that God deserves to be worshiped in the home regularly and has given three elements to do it:

²⁴ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 50.

reading, praying, and singing.²⁵

Whitney's essential practices provide incredible insight for my family worship curriculum at FBCK. His focus on the Word of God being primary and how he forms and structures the prayer time is extremely insightful and helpful. The entire curriculum will remind each participant that God's Word is authoritative and Jesus is the fountain from which the meaning of life flows. Also, Whitney's explanation of how to use the Bible to pray in addition to creating a prayer list is a reminder that God cares about how and what we pray while highlighting the didactic element to prayer as well. In all these elements, the leader is teaching the spouse and children how to know and respond to God. In this curriculum, each participating member will be tasked with engaging in each of the three essential elements of family worship to grow in Christ individually and as a family.

Joel R. Beeke's Essential Elements of Family Worship

Joel R. Beeke serves as pastor of Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and President and Professor of Systematic Theology and Homiletics at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. In *Family Worship*, Beeke presents three essential principles for family worship: daily instruction to the Word of God, daily prayer to the throne of God, and daily singing praise to God.

Beeke's first element of family worship is instruction in the Word of God. Before beginning instruction of the Word, he encourages the entire family to offer a private prayer for God's blessing upon the worship time. Beginning family worship with the reading of God's Word, he encourages participants to already have copies of the Bible, Psalter, and song sheets out for those who can read. For young children not yet able to read, he suggests reading a few verses together and then picking one verse from those that were read to memorize as a family. For young children, Beeke recommends *Truths of God's*

²⁵ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 51.

Word and From the Lips of Little Ones by Jeff Kingswood.²⁶ For older children, he recommends reading a passage of Scripture, memorizing it, and closing the time by asking questions relating to what had been read to stimulate personal engagement and application. When reading the Bible, Beeke stresses the importance of intentionality; mainly, the head of the household knows how the three primary elements in family worship will be employed before beginning. He suggests reading twenty verses in the Old Testament in the morning and twenty verses in the New Testament, or read thematically, studying miracles or biographical portions.²⁷ The most important part is being in the Word. As families gather to read the Word, he encourages leaders in the home not to discourage participation and interaction, but to welcome it. When encouraging discussion, Beeke anticipates the leader not having an extensive theological background so advises parents to keep commentaries around to provide correct answers to questions children may have. When reading and teaching the Word to families, Beeke reminds parents that it is important to stick to the meaning of the biblical text and to not diminish or distract the meaning for the sake of the young children. The goal, he says, is to “aim for simplicity and soundness.”²⁸ Family worship must begin with the reading of the Bible so that children will know the Lord and may keep the ways of the Lord (Gen 18:19).

Beeke’s second essential element of family worship is prayer. He recommends prayers that are brief, simple, and not shallow, and uses a variety of categories. First, his recommendation is not to pray for longer than five minutes as he asserts that long prayers can often do more harm than good. Second, he encourages parents to keep prayers simple, not shallow, meaning parents are encouraged to pray for situations and people in which the children are already familiar all the while guarding against self-focused, trivial prayers.

²⁶ Joel Beeke, *Family Worship* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2009), 18.

²⁷ Beeke, *Family Worship*, 23.

²⁸ Beeke, *Family Worship*, 27.

When praying, Beeke suggests mentioning the names and specific needs of each child while praying for them to build unity and trust. Another element for parents to think of when praying is to add different types of prayers to the family worship time. Prayers of invocation, adoration, thanksgiving, dependence, and confession.²⁹ Doing so will keep prayer time from becoming standard procedure and will provide variety, but most importantly will teach children the inexhaustibility of God and His character and nature and the constant need and dependence we have for Him. Offering prayers of confession for individual sins and sins of the family gives recognition to the righteous wrath and discipline that is deserved and gives opportunity to profess the holiness of God and the forgiveness of sins in Christ, which continue to cleanse of all unrighteousness. A major element in the prayer time is giving thanks, where the family give praise to the Lord for food, clothing, and shelter, deliverance from evil, strength to live for Christ, answered prayers, and more. When closing the prayer, Beeke encourages parents to bless God for His person and work while asking that His glory would be displayed concluding the prayer with “amen,” which means, “certainly it shall be so.”³⁰ Pulling from all these different types of prayers not only keeps prayer from becoming mundane, but more importantly works to assist in keeping a well-balanced prayer life while modeling all the wonderful aspects in which his people are to express their dependence to God.

Beeke’s third essential component of family worship is singing. Within this element he offers four helpful categories to guide families in what and how to sing: (1) sing sound doctrine; (2) sing psalms primarily with hymns; (3) sing simple psalms; and (4) sing heartily and with feeling.³¹ Beeke rightly asserts the importance of singing corrects truths about God’s character and nature and the nature of man and his response

²⁹ Beeke, *Family Worship*, 28-29.

³⁰ Beeke, *Family Worship*, 31.

³¹ Beeke, *Family Worship*, 31-32.

to a holy God. He concludes that there is no reason for Christians to sing songs that misrepresent God and their relationship to Him, regardless of how catchy the tune may be.³² Second, Beeke explains that the Psalter is to be sung primarily while weaving in hymns that are good and true. Primarily, the Psalms are to be sung encouraging the use of simple Psalms that young children can easily master. In trying to guide parents in appropriate song themes for children, Beeke says to look for themes of “repentance, faith, and renewal of heart and life; songs that reveal God’s love for His people, and the love of Christ for the lambs of his flock, or that remind them of their covenant privileges and duty.”³³ Finally, when singing, it is important to sing to the Lord heartily and with feeling as one meditates and thinks on the truths being expressed in the lyrics being sung. Beeke suggests taking time to discuss the phrases in the songs to help learn theological truths and promote dialogue.

When leading family worship through the reading of God’s Word, praying, and singing, Beeke says to keep these family gatherings short, recommending twice a day: a morning session that is around ten minutes and an evening session around fifteen minutes. Bible reading and discussion of the passage may take the longest amount of time so use the remaining minutes to split between prayer and singing. Not only is brevity important, but consistency is a must. Beeke advises that it is better to have shorter times of family worship spread out over many days than fewer days attempting longer times of gatherings. While working to be consistent to prioritize daily family worship, Beeke exhorts parents to not give in to reasons to avoid family worship, whether it be parents who lost their temper, a child who is acting rebellious, or the family has already had a late night. The key is to make this a priority so that children will know that time with the Lord is not secondary but primary for you and the life of the family.³⁴

³² Beeke, *Family Worship*, 31.

³³ Beeke, *Family Worship*, 32.

³⁴ Beeke, *Family Worship*, 22.

In conclusion, Beeke's primary three components of family worship are daily instruction of the Word of God, daily prayer to the throne of God, and daily singing the praise of God. These three elements must be an important part of the family worship curriculum at FBCK. My aim is that every participant would grow in the understanding, commitment, and confidence in each of the primary elements throughout the duration of the sessions and that they would acquire the necessary tool and skills, and connect with one another in such a way communally to deepen and expand the spiritual leadership that they provide in their homes.

Theological Synthesis

In reading these three scholars, I discovered that J. W. Alexander, Donald S. Whitney, and Joel R. Beeke have created an invaluable framework for both pastors and laymen in working to develop a curriculum for family worship. The sheer weight of the spiritual responsibility for training one's children in the "discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4) will no doubt be daunting to families that participate in the family worship course, but these three theologians have simplified the key elements of family worship to make it clear, concise, and easily achievable. While each theologian may have a different approach to how each element is accomplished in worship, they would agree on much more than they would disagree.

First, each of the three family worship philosophies places an incredible value on the Word of God being present during each family session. All three theologians ascribe to a high view of Scripture and rely on its authority to know and obey God. In every view, Scripture was revealed to be the centerpiece of the family worship time and each encouraged parents to ask questions and work to boost discussion and dialogue. The Word of God sanctifies, so it is no surprise that these three men find it to be the primary content and discussion at the family gathering. All three agreed that the entire Word of God be read during family worship. They made exceptions for younger children, but with clear instruction that the goal was to read the entire Bible. Each theologian had different

views on how much to read a day, but all agreed that a good model is to read something from the Old Testament and a passage from the New Testament every day. Furthermore, not only did they agree that the Word of God was important, but they agreed on how to read it audibly. When reading the Word of God, all testified that it needed to be read and explained with enthusiasm and not mundane or without luster. Belief that one is reading the very words of God should be seen as such an awesome gift and privilege that one could not possibly read without being spirited.

Second, all three exemplary authors submitted that prayer was to be an important aspect in family worship. There were some unique perspectives when dealing with the topic of prayer. Alexander believes prayer to be the essential part of family worship and should have “first place.”³⁵ Whereas Alexander thought it most prominent, Whitney and Beeke suggest it be second, following the Word of God. Even though Whitney and Beeke both place prayer as second, both give helpful advice on how to pray providing helpful perspectives. Whitney’s description about reading the Scripture first to inform one’s prayer time was beneficial. In addition, his explanation of what to include on a family prayer list proved also to be insightful and practical. Beeke’s guide to prayer includes elements of using the Word of God to guide a person in their prayer, but his breakdown of the types of prayers to offer proved most helpful. Breaking prayer types down into invocation, dependency, confession, intercession, and thanksgiving reveals the great well which can be drawn from when communicating with God and the great mercy and grace of God. While all three agree that family prayer should be an essential element of family worship, each had a unique perspective about prayer that the other did not, so hearing from all three views mined the riches to be discovered in prayer.

Third, all three viewpoints assert that singing is an essential part of the family worship gathering. Both Alexander and Beeke show a clear leaning to Psalms singing primarily while allowing for a few hymns that are doctrinally sound to be sung in the home.

³⁵ Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 113.

Whitney's *Family Worship* does not make a specific call to singing of the psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs that Alexander and Beeke make. However, neither Alexander or Beeke mention what spiritual songs are to be and seemingly encourage the reader to lead in psalms primary with a few hymns,³⁶ whereas Whitney's charge to the family is to sing the Lord's praises.³⁷ Additionally, all three theologian pastors stress the importance of singing correct and rich doctrine. Alexander says, "It is an offense against God to address Him in worst of high moment while, perhaps, we have no thought of their meaning, still less any sympathy with their sentiment."³⁸ From reading these theologians, one can assume that they would all be in agreement with this statement having referred to the need for doctrinal purity in the songs chosen to be sung not just in corporate worship, but in the home.

Fourth, in their discourse on family worship, all three theologians assert that daily family worship should be practiced. Alexander and Beeke suggest a morning and evening time of family worship and appear more rigid in the necessity of it happening every day. Whitney on the other hand takes a more balanced approach, encouraging families to practice family worship once every day but to engage in it according to one's schedule. To be fair to Alexander and Beeke, all three authors do give families encouragement to be flexible as family situations ebb and flow. Even within the giving of grace to the family schedule, all three authors are clear on the expectation that families, mainly parents, must set family worship time up as a priority and expectation that must happen, not an afterthought.

Fifth, while all three agree that the Word, prayer, and singing form the core aspects of family worship, both Beeke and Whitney suggest the additional use of Scripture memory and the reading of biographies, doctrinal books, and other Christian writings.

³⁶ Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 128.

³⁷ Whitney, *Family Worship*, 46.

³⁸ Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 134.

While they could have just left those three elements speak for themselves, they go a step further in helping parents not only know that deeper study was an option, but how to incorporate different elements in family worship to keep in new and fresh.

Last, both Whitney and Beeke specifically address length of family worship time. Both encourage family worship leaders to aim for brevity and to employ the family worship elements of read, pray, and sing all within an allotted ten-to-fifteen-minute time slot. In *Thoughts on Family Worship*, Alexander does not address the particular length of time each family worship service should have, however, he does address the need for brevity in prayer, saying, “The best model is found in the brief and childlike petitions which we find in the Psalms, and other parts of Scripture.”³⁹ From that, one can assume that Alexander would align closely with Whitney and Beeke’s assertion of brief times of family worship.

Conclusion

While each of these theologians present the same three essential elements of family worship, they all provide a unique and helpful perspective that the other one did not cover. Therefore, my intention was to create a family worship curriculum for the families of FBCK pulling from the insights of these three exemplary men.

³⁹ Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship*, 114.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

This chapter describes the preparation and implementation of the ministry project at First Baptist Church in Keller, Texas (FBCK). The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a curriculum of family worship to grow mature, multiplying followers of Christ at FBCK. What follows will be a description of the process employed to assess the current family worship practices and the steps taken to strengthen these practices at FBCK. First, I provide information regarding the target group from which I made participant selections. Second, a general overview of the sixteen weeks of implementing the project will be supplied, including summaries of the six teaching sessions. Third, helpful insights from the expert panel evaluations will be addressed.

Target Group

The target group for this ministry project was families with children under the age of ten years old at FBCK. The reasoning behind the selected age cap was to limit the scope of the research and to focus the teaching in a way that would be useful to the participants rather than having a wide range of ages which could possibly weaken the ability to address participants' specific needs. Only those selected for participation received a family worship survey and cooperation in the ministry project was completely voluntary.

Pre-Session Implementation

This project had three goals. The first goal was to assess the knowledge and confidence of families with children ten years old and younger who are members of FBCK as it relates to family worship practices. The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum on family worship. The third and final goal was to equip families to develop

the regular practice of family worship in the home. In the sixteen weeks between May 29, 2022, and September 11, 2022, weeks 1 and 2 focused on the development of the instrument which would be used to determine the current perception and practices of family worship. Week 3 was the completion and submission of the research profile request that allowed me to approach the target audience about the upcoming study. Upon receiving approval, weeks 4-7 were devoted to assessing the current family worship perceptions and practices of the participants. Weeks 8-14 were the peak of the project; that is, the teaching of the family worship curriculum. Weeks 15 and 16 were dedicated to the post-test results and analyzation of the data, which also included the information collected from the pre-test.

Weeks 1-2

During weeks 1 and 2 of the ministry project, I created an instrument to accurately assess the family worship practices of select families at FBCK. The Family Worship Survey (FWS) served as the pre-test and post-test in this ministry project. The final survey included thirty-nine questions addressing many of the beliefs Christian families may have regarding family worship and the role of parents in discipling their children.¹ Each question was based on a five-point Likert scale. Each participant graded themselves on a scale of 0 to 5 on each question, rating from strongly disagree to strongly agree. My desire for this scale was for participants to accurately describe their perception and practice of family worship.

Week 3

Once the survey was developed, I sent the instrument to my doctoral supervisor for edits and comments. Upon receiving revisions I was informed that I could move forward and complete the research profile request. During week 3, I submitted my research profile for approval to begin implementing my project. Approval to begin the

¹ See appendix 1.

implementation process came a few days later. As I waited for confirmation, I began developing a basic outline of the family worship curriculum. In addition, I selected and met with four prospective individuals to serve as my expert panel for the purpose of evaluating the curriculum.

Week 4-5

During weeks 4 and 5 I further developed the family worship curriculum. While writing my curriculum I began making a list of potential candidates to ask to participate in the family worship series. When considering who would participate, my target audience were parents of ten-year-olds and younger. Ideally, I wanted to see both husbands and wives participate in this study. By the end of week 5, the list had seven couples, totaling fourteen targeted participants. During week 5 I completed the initial curriculum draft and set a target date of July 31, 2022 to begin teaching the family worship study.

In writing the curriculum, I based the content upon the research completed in chapters 2-3. Chapter 2 addressed the biblical and theological foundation for family worship while chapter 3, the theoretical and practical issues related to family worship, surveyed and synthesized three modern scholars on family worship. All three scholars arrived at developing three primary elements that must be employed in family worship: reading the Bible, prayer, and singing. The research discovered while developing chapters 1-3 guided the curriculum development. While working on the curriculum, I needed to decide when the sessions were going to take place. Since the study involved parents with young children, I approached the senior pastor and asked his permission to teach the lessons on Sunday mornings during the Sunday school hour. He agreed that was the best option and suggested I meet with the family and discipleship pastor to inform him of my plans since it would affect the Sunday school hour. I scheduled a time to meet with the family and discipleship pastor and shared what I wanted to do, when I wanted to start, and

that the class would meet during the regular scheduled Sunday school time. He approved the study for my target date and desired time on Sunday mornings.

Week 6

During week 6 I began to distribute the approved Family Worship Survey to the fourteen individuals I had selected to participate in the study. On July 12, 2022, I mailed each prospective participant an envelope containing a letter explaining the purpose of the study, a copy of the survey, and a self-addressed envelope with postage to encourage a swifter response. Each potential participant was asked to confirm or decline participation in the study no later than July 26, 2022.

In addition, I finished writing the curriculum during week 6 and was ready to send out the curriculum and expert evaluation rubric to the four expert panelists that had agreed to serve. On July 15, 2022, I emailed all four expert panelists a copy of the curriculum content spanning the six sessions, and the expert panel evaluation rubric that had been developed and approved by my doctoral supervisor.² The expert panel consisted of Dustin Bruce, my doctoral supervisor and Dean of Boyce College and Assistant Professor of Christian Theology and Church History; David Toledo, Associate Professor of Music and Associate Dean for Academic Effectiveness at California Baptist University; Brad Brand, Associate Pastor of Worship and Pastoral Care; and Michael Wright, pastor, ministry creator of The Gospel in Real Life podcast, and accomplished life coach.

Week 7

In week 7 I began to receive completed surveys and began analyzing the data. The returned pre-surveys revealed obvious strengths and weaknesses regarding the perceptions and practices of family worship in our families at FBCK.

I also received my completed rubrics from the expert panel. Originally, four individuals agreed to serve as my expert panel, but Michael Wright had a family

² See appendix 2.

emergency and was unable to provide an evaluation within the allotted time. This meant that three expert panelists reviewed the curriculum and completed the necessary evaluation rubric. The expert panel evaluations were due by Tuesday, July 26, 2022, and I received all three evaluations on time. Their insights led to many improvements that enhanced the clarity and effectiveness of the curriculum.³ First, the feedback suggested adding more helpful elements in the family worship guides like song lyrics, Scripture memory verses, and catechism questions. Originally in my curriculum I suggested that families engage in singing certain songs during certain weeks while participating in the study. However, while giving the title of the song, I did not include the lyrics. One suggestion was to add the lyrics to the song titles. Additionally, I mentioned in my teaching that using catechisms and Scripture memory are helpful tools to include in family worship, but I failed to include that in the practice guides provided for the participants' use. Second, the feedback called for a greater explanation of terms because within the curriculum it was stated that the curriculum "assumed a depth of knowledge that might not apply to every context." Receiving these evaluations encouraged a deeper reading of the curriculum to ensure that explanation of certain words and ideas were expressed more clearly.

Finally, one element of the feedback was to include that family worship is also for integrated family with stepparents, stepchildren, and stepsiblings. This was a helpful insight because my curriculum could have been seen as being geared to complete with families with a mom and a dad rather than integrated families or single-parent homes. This assisted me in broadening the context so the curriculum could be used in a greater way to encourage that family worship is for families in all contexts. These evaluations strengthened the arguments for family worship, brought clarity to the focus of the teaching, and assisted in adopting helpful approaches to adopting family worship practices in the home that will be clear and concise during the implementation period.

³ See appendix 3.

Week 8

During week 8 I revised the curriculum based on the expert panel’s evaluations and reached out to all fourteen participants for the purpose of registering and confirming participation in the study while answering any questions that arose. From the information received from the completed surveys and evaluations, I centered the family worship curriculum around six topics: “Demystifying Family Worship—The Fundamentals,” “Building a Biblical Foundation for Family Worship,” J. W. Alexander, Joel Beeke, and Donald S. Whitney Synthesize the Biblical Warrant for Family Worship in Three Essential Elements: Read, Pray, and Sing,” “The Family Worship Primary Element of Reading the Bible,” “The Family Worship Primary Element of Prayer,” and “The Family Worship Primary Element of Singing.” Each lesson contained four specific sections: an introductory discussion to hear reports on how family worship times went in the homes of the participants’ the previous week, the main lesson based on multiple Bible passages and theologians, a closing discussion on points of application, and finally, a homework section that participants would complete during the week before the next session.

Weekly Sessions Implementation

In weeks 9-14, the family worship series synthesized using the model from the three theologians surveyed in chapter 3 was implemented. Utilizing the insight from Alexander, Beeke, and Whitney, I developed a four-step family worship process—select, teach, demonstrate, and emulate—based on the three primary elements of family worship these three theologians espouse: read the Bible, pray, and sing. All four of these steps were implemented during the sixteen weeks of this phase of the project. During the six weeks of family worship sessions, participants and I gathered every Sunday morning from 9:40 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. in the Choir Suite at FBCK for the teaching time. To show my appreciation for their participation, I had donuts, pigs-in-a-blanket, and water available. Prior to the first meeting, I prepared a folder containing session handouts and family worship examples to assist families in the practice of family worship. The family worship

guides contained a Scripture reading, certain themes about God’s character, nature, what He has done, a prayer time with certain prompts to encourage topics of prayer, a recommended song, Scripture memory passage, and catechesis. These guides were developed to create a framework for all participants to become familiar with leading family worship and knowing just how simple and informal it could be.

In addition to the folder, I sent emails the preceding Friday before each Sunday’s session that contained what would be studied the next Sunday, reminders of the study, and providing words of encouragement. I also communicated through text messages to check on the participants’ progress during the week and to offer encouragement.

Each session was videoed on my phone and posted in Dropbox with a link sent to all the participants by Sunday afternoon in case they wanted to go back and listen to a segment they needed to hear again, or a participant was absent for a session and needed to view it at a later time. By employing e-mail and text messaging, I was able to stay in contact with the participants during the week between sessions.

Week 9: “Demystifying Family Worship— The Fundamentals”

After all fourteen participants committed to the study, along with my wife, we began to meet regularly to receive the teaching on family worship. July 31, 2022 was the first session. The goal of this first session was to provide participants with the fundamentals of family worship. First, I explained the purpose of the study, which is to discover God’s expectations of the family, mainly in the training of children and to study how various theologians have interpreted God’s call for the family. I gave three desired outcomes: to see parental role as shepherds, especially fathers, to view the family as a little flock, and to gain a deep understanding and perspective on what it means to care for the souls of children.

After addressing the study’s purpose and desired outcomes, I shared that the concept of family worship is a tool that has been developed to assist all parents.

Participants had a moment of discussion where I asked the group what they thought family worship was and how it was to be accomplished. Group members responded and we had a great discussion. I gave the working definition for family worship, discussed who family worship was for, and provided three main elements of family worship with two secondary elements. The primary elements of family worship are read the Bible, pray, and sing. The secondary elements are catechisms and Scripture memory. Each element contained selected Scriptures to point participants to God's Word on these subjects with an understanding that greater detail would be given to each element later on in the study. I led a discussion as to why parents should care about family worship and shared common concerns families have that often seem to keep family worship from being practiced in the home.

The session ended with two challenges. First, participants were to talk with their spouse and children about engaging in family worship and how this practice might impact their family. The second challenge was for all participants to have a time of Bible reading, prayer, and singing at least twice in the coming week. Each participant was to take notes as to what was done and how it went. Each participant was asked to provide a report on the experience in the upcoming session.

Week 10: "Building a Biblical Foundation for Family Worship"

The second session of the family worship series focused on discovering what the Bible has to say regarding family worship. Prior to the teaching, I asked participants if they had ever come across the term *family worship* in their years of studying the Bible? They all replied, "no." I congratulated them and explained they were correct. While *family worship* is not found in the Bible, the principles and primary elements of family worship that will be addressed are found throughout the entire Bible.

The Bible teaching did not focus on one passage but provided a brief overview of both Old and New Testament examples where the pattern of family worship is found. I

started by reminding the families that all God's people are called and commanded to worship God from Deuteronomy 6:14 and Jesus's own words found in Luke 4:8. I pointed participants to Abraham from Genesis 18:17-19 and spoke of how God did not hide from Abraham what He was about to do to Sodom and Gomorrah for the purpose that Abraham would teach his children about the character of the Lord so that they would obey (v. 19).

Using Job 1:1-5, participants looked at the life of Job and how he watched over the souls of his children by consecrating them and giving burnt offerings to the Lord on their behalf. This time of worship and sacrificing before the Lord took place when they were together.

Turning to Joshua 24:14-15, members discussed that Joshua was committed to serving the Lord personally and to lead his family to serve the Lord. He did not make worshiping God optional in his family. They were going to serve the Lord (v. 15).

After this, I pivoted to the main three texts for teaching: Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Psalm 78:1-8, and Ephesians 6:1-4. In Deuteronomy 6, Moses explains that God is the one and only true God (v. 4), God commands His people to know and love Him (v. 5), and gives two responses to who God is: first there is the personal response (vv. 6-7), and then the communal response (vv. 8-9). Within verse 5 specifically parents are tasked with the command to know God and teach their children to know and love Him. In Psalm 78:1-8 families discussed that God commanded the heads of the household to tell the coming generation the deeds of the Lord (v. 4) and that the primary vehicle for teaching was in the home. Asaph, the psalmist, explains that is the responsibility of the parents to teach the next generation about God so that they would know the past sinful deeds of their parents and forefathers and discover the mercy and lovingkindness of God, so that they would put their hope in God and respond by living in obedience (vv. 7-8). Finally, I taught from Ephesians 6:1-4 in which verse 4 is written specifically to fathers. Participants discussed that the father is to instruct and teach his children in the way that God teaches

and His children. Fathers are to find their motives in teaching and disciplining their children to glorify God and to encourage Christ-honoring living in their children.

I explained that the Bible is full of commands to families to lead their children to know and love God, but these examples are meant to encourage and exhort all to take the soul care of children seriously. After a brief discussion about how these scriptures impact our thinking and actions, I issued the homework that all were to lead their family in the three elements of Bible reading, prayer, and singing at least two times this week documenting what happened and to be ready to share at the beginning of next session. c

Week 11: “J. W. Alexander, Joel Beeke, and Donald S. Whitney Synthesize the Biblical Warrant for Family Worship in Three Essential Elements: Read, Pray, and Sing”

The overarching goal of this session was to inform participants how three reformed theologians interpreted the Bible’s command for parents to lead children to know and love God. I surveyed and synthesized the teaching of nineteenth-century Presbyterian pastor J. W. Alexander; president of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and pastor of Heritage Netherlands in Grand Rapids Joel Beeke; and Donald S. Whitney, who is an accomplished author, theologian, and professor of biblical spirituality at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. All three of these men have written about the role of parents in leading their children spiritually and strongly commend the use of family worship as a primary tool for spiritual engagement in the home. I discussed how each theologian arrived at three primary elements to be used in family worship: a time of reading the Bible, prayer, and singing. Each scholar had a slightly different perspective of how those three elements can be applied, which proved helpful in providing participants with a broader view on what tools are available when engaging in family worship. In this session, I also discussed Whitney’s admonition that the use of catechisms, Scripture memory, and the reading of books can be used to for greater spiritual depth and refreshment. For homework, participants were assigned a particular Scripture text to read in the next class and to

provide a few highlights to the passage. Additionally, participants were instructed to engage in three family worship times in their home and to look for opportunities throughout the day to point their children to spiritual truths and realities. They were to take notes of when this happened and how it went. Text messages were sent, and my regular weekly e-mail was sent so participants could prepare for the next session.

Week 12: “The Family Worship Primary Element of Reading the Bible”

The session began with updates from participants on how the practice of family worship was developing in their homes. Applying the three primary elements from the three surveyed theologians, this session focused on teaching participants how to lead their families in family worship employing the element of reading the Bible. I focused on reestablishing the authority, purpose, and sufficiency of the Word of God by discussing Hebrews 4:12, Ephesians 6:10-18, and 2 Timothy 3:16-17. In talking about the authority of God’s Word, participants also studied that the only proper response to God’s Word is to listen and obey, shown clearly in Psalm 119:7-8 and Colossians 3:16. After establishing the biblical warrant and primary role the Bible has in family worship, I discussed what translations and other resources can be used to teach the Bible—from Bible translations to be used for older children to storybook Bibles for younger children. I pointed out helpful ways in which to read the Bible, what to read, and expectations on how to expound the biblical passage. Participants had a time of sharing in which they discussed current Bible reading practices and the various struggles that often keep them from reading the Bible in their home. After a few moments of sharing, each participant read their assigned Scripture passage from the previous week and provided a few highlights of each passage; mainly, what the passage revealed about God and humanity, and did the reading call for a particular response. Following the time of sharing, this week’s challenge was to prioritize Bible reading for the week and develop long-term goals to incorporate Scripture reading in family worship consistently. Participants were to discuss these goals with their spouse

and family. These additions were to be addressed along with the weekly expectation that families would engage in family worship at least three times during the week. After the session, text messages were sent to provide encouragement and remind them of the homework to be completed prior to the next week's session. On Friday, my e-mail went out to all participants to inform them of the upcoming session's topic and goals.

Week 13: “The Family Worship Primary Element of Prayer”

I began the session by discussing the successes and struggles of leading family worship in each home during the previous week. Members also discussed what families decided regarding the development of long-term goals and disciplines that were going to be implemented to make Bible reading a family priority.

The primary teaching time of this session emphasized the primary element of prayer in family worship. Participants looked to 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Matthew 6:5, and the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, and established that believers are commanded to pray. I highlighted that if Jesus—the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, the sinless One—needed to have times of communion with God the Father, then how much more so do believers? After the biblical teaching time, I discussed practical elements on how to lead families in times of intentional prayer. Examples included using elements from the Bible passage that was previously read and keeping a family prayer list, including a list of God's attributes, using various types of prayers, such as invocation, adoration, thanksgiving, dependance, confession, and intercession. After discussing the various elements to be used to keep prayer anew, members discussed practical ways families could make prayer a priority. These elements were developed from the three theologians surveyed in chapter 3. I provided participants with a few sources that highlighted the prayer lives and prayers of the Puritans.

I moved into a time of discussion after the primary teaching time where participants discussed current prayer practice in their homes and what family activities

keep them from having a more intentional time of prayer. After this discussion, participants had a group time focused on using Scripture to develop and guide a time of prayer. Using Psalm 1:1-4, 23, and 95:1-7, I discussed what was revealed about God and humanity, and if the reader was called to a particular response. I wrote these thoughts on the board as the participants shared from each verse. With each verse, I showed how members could develop a prayer using the various themes discussed in the teaching time. After showing the participants three verses as examples, I used Psalm 117, Romans 12:14-21, and Colossians 3:2-8 and asked for three volunteers to read the passage and then use that assigned passage to develop a scripture-guided prayer time. I closed the time discussing the next week's homework, which included leading family worship at least three times that week and to discuss and develop goals to make prayer time more intentional and consistent long-term. During the week I sent text messages of encouragement and checked on the progress. On Friday, I sent out the reminder e-mail to inform participants of the upcoming session's topic and goals.

Week 14: "The Family Worship Primary Element of Singing"

The last session focused on singing as being the third primary element of family worship. Bible passages and practical applications given in this session were inspired and adapted by synthesizing Alexander, Beeke, and Whitney's contribution to the subject.

Before entering the teaching, I took time to debrief how the previous week went regarding leading times of family worship. Participants shared what was encouraging and also difficulties they had experienced. Members also took time to discuss how families prioritized prayer during the week and participants were asked to share what they learned.

Surveying a few scriptures about singing, I addressed that believers have both the duty and delight to sing praises to God. Using Psalm 9:2; 13:5-6; 47; 68:4-5; 95:1-5; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18-19; and 1 Corinthians 14:15, I discussed the biblical

warrant to sing to the Lord. I shared that singing to God is response to who God is, what He has done, and often expresses a commitment that is made as a response to those truths. Singing is a way to express theology put to music and is a helpful tool in expressing a myriad of responses to God, such as praise, adoration, thanksgiving, confession, repentance, assurance, commissioning, commitment of obedience, and lament. After the biblical teaching time, I shared some practical helps to encourage singing in the home. Some examples are, but are not limited to, use the hymnbook the church uses to sing songs of praise to God, subscribe to the Family Worship e-mail list at FBC Keller to work on songs that will be sung the next Sunday morning in corporate worship, sing Scripture which will help the family hide God's Word in their hearts, sing modern Christian songs that are doctrinally true, and when singing songs, do not feel pressured to sing the entire piece of music but as you sing, sing boisterously, enthusiastically, and confidently. I shared helpful resources that participants could use for the singing portion of family worship. At FBCK, we use the 1991 Baptist Hymnal and also recommend *Our Hymns, Our Heritage* by David Leeman.⁴ I also shared an example of the first ten songs a family could learn that are a mixture of older hymns and newer modern hymns and songs that are doctrinally true and can be learned by children of various ages.

After this time, members put into practice what they had learned about singing. A few minutes were used to sing one verse of a few hymns mentioned in my list of ten songs to start with. Participants sang the hymns in various ways: a cappella, which means without accompaniment, accompanied with guitar, and with an audio recording. These three elements were used to show the various ways singing can be encouraged in the home even if the parents leading do not feel overly musical.

At the close of the session, I talked about additional elements that can be employed to further deeper growth in family worship. I made it clear that these were not

⁴ David Leeman and Barbara Leeman, *Our Hymns, Our Heritage: A Student Guide to the Songs of the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 2022).

primary elements suggested by the three theologians surveyed and that the use of these elements should not become a burden to the parent or children. These elements were just given for further study if interested. Those elements are the use of catechesis, Scripture memory, and the reading of Christian fiction, novels, and biographies for enjoyment. I shared a few helpful resources that may be used to encourage this further study.

I closed the session reminding participants that the goal of family worship is to be intentional, consistent, brief, gracious, and to enjoy the time in worshiping the Lord together as a family. Upon finishing, I discussed what commitments families could make in light of this study and what guardrails would be placed to ensure that those goals remain consistent.

The homework was to continue growing as participants seek to shepherd their families in a way that honors the Lord. Additionally, participants were encouraged to continue the practice of family worship three times per week and to encourage other families to begin family worship. As the session ended, participants received Family Worship Survey and were instructed to complete it during the next week. This post-survey was given with a pre-postmarked envelope with a return date of the next Sunday, September 11, 2022.

Weeks 15 and 16

During week 15, I followed up with each participant to ensure that the Family Worship Surveys would be delivered back to me on time and to see if there were any unanswered questions, in addition to any helpful feedback that could be given. If each participant attended every session, participated in the discussions, and completed each week's homework, then their family worship perception and practices should trend in a positive way that reveals a greater level of understanding and ability to lead family worship in the home.

After having received all the post-surveys, week 16 was used to analyze the results of the post-survey with pre-survey to determine what changes, if any, occurred as

a result of completing the series on family worship. After analyzation of the results, I turned my attention to reporting these results which will be found in the next chapter of this project.

Conclusion

This family worship ministry project desired to see an increase in the perceptions and practices of family worship in young families that attend FBCK. The first seven weeks were spent researching, writing, and developing the curriculum and the last two weeks were spent analyzing the data in preparation for reporting the results of the study for the next phase of the project. Weeks 9-14 were reserved for the teaching of the six-week curriculum, which was developed for the primary purpose of equipping families to know the biblical warrant for family worship in the home and to grow each participants' confidence to lead family worship in the home with intentionality and constituency. The aim of this curriculum was that every participant would know that God expects Christian families to worship Him in their homes and that parents would understand this calling and expectation falls to them. I pray that God will use the Bible, and the research and practical insights discovered by Alexander, Beeke, and Whitney to encourage FBCK members to impact families for the glory of Christ by engaging in a regular and intentional time of family worship.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This four-year ministry project was a journey that deeply enriched my life. Prior to enrolling at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, God began to produce within me a deeper desire to lead my children to grow in the Lord. That is when I discovered the practice of what is called family worship. I decided early on in my doctoral studies that deepening my understanding and practice of family worship was not only something I needed personally but something the members at FBCK would benefit from as well. Knowing that FBCK's favorite ministry phrase is *Soli Deo Gloria*, I had to ask myself, "What am I going to do to help my family and the families of FBCK grow in the intentional spiritual formation of our children?" As I began talking with various families in the church to discover who was practicing family worship, I quickly realized that church members were eager and willing to lead their families spiritually but felt unequipped. From my personal desire to grow as a shepherd of my family and FBCK, I have seen this journey strengthen me and others that participated in the study. This chapter evaluates the success of the ministry project and seeks to provide important observations that will strengthen and encourage others who wish to implement a similar study.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a curriculum of family worship to grow mature, multiplying follower of Christ at First Baptist Church. To discover the success of the project, I compared the pre-test scores of the fourteen participants with the post-test scores of the same fourteen participants. After receiving and compiling the pre-test scores, I determined the mean score using an Excel spreadsheet to discover the current perceptions and family worship practices among those who would

be participating. The family worship survey pre-test proved to be instrumental in the curriculum development to serve the needs of participants. The survey consisted of thirty-nine questions and statements. The first nine questions were general, unscored questions that determined gender, membership, sex, how many children, the age range of one's children, and marital status. The remaining thirty statements assessed current family worship practices. Participants answered questions pertaining to family worship using a five-point Likert scale. The mean score from the fourteen pre-test surveys was 125.

After the pre-tests were administered and completed, I began teaching the six-week class on family worship. Once the required sessions had finished, I administered the family worship survey post-tests to the participants once again. The measure for this goal was met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre and post-session survey scores: $t_{(13)} = -3.904$, $p < .0009$. Assuming a level of significance of .05, the *t*-test showed that teaching on family worship made a significant change. The participant's post-test mean score also increased from 125 to 134.14.

The purpose of this project was accomplished. Seven homes consisting of fourteen adults were directly trained to value, prioritize, and lead family worship in their homes. A small group was selected to participate in this project to instruct and encourage those individual families with the distinct purpose and intent that those they would prioritize discipleship in their homes while encouraging other families to implement family worship in the home. Though this project began with a small group, discipleship is a multiplying ministry. The participants that completed the family worship series were charged with sharing what they learned with other families. Judging by the discussions, questions, and insight participants shared throughout the implementation process, members have been encouraged, trained, and are actively implementing family worship in the home. Many families have already come to me requesting that I repeat this teaching and make it available churchwide.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

This ministry project had three goals to ensure successful completion. Each goal represented an actionable and necessary step to assess the current culture, understanding, and trends of family worship while seeking to teach and equip families to grow mature followers of Christ in the home.

Goal 1

The first goal was to assess the knowledge and confidence of families with children ten years old and younger who are members of FBCK as it relates to family worship practices. The current practices were assessed through the family worship survey that I administered.¹ This survey served as the pre-test and post-test for this ministry project. I mailed the surveys to all fourteen participants that I hoped would commit to the study. My initial goal was considered successfully met with the confirmation of ten participants, and I was pleased to discover that all fourteen participants agreed to participate. Therefore, the first goal was considered to be met as all fourteen pre-test surveys were collected and participation was confirmed.

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum of family worship. Joyful and extensive research into God's Word followed as I sought to use the clearest and most concise Scriptures to encourage and equip the study's participants in the allotted six weeks. The works of J. W. Alexander, Joel Beeke, and Donald S. Whitney assisted in interpreting the Scriptures dealing with family worship and narrowed the practice down to three primary elements: reading the Bible, prayer, and singing. I took the developments suggested by these three scholars and adopted their three primary elements of family worship to inform my curriculum. In each session, various Bible verses were surveyed, and each session had a time for discussion, with homework to encourage families to lead

¹ See appendix 1.

family worship in the home during the week. In addition to creating the six-week curriculum of family worship, I secured three expert panelists to evaluate and review the family worship curriculum. These three experts evaluated my curriculum using a provided rubric.² I considered this second goal met when all three expert panelists scored each category on the rubric with a sufficient rating of “3” or more.

Goal 3

The third goal was to equip families to develop the regular practice of family worship in the home. I selected seven couples for a total of fourteen participants from my Sunday school class to participate in this doctoral project. During the six weeks of teaching, the members discussed the meaning of family worship, hindrances to leading family worship, and the primary priorities of a parent. Using the Bible and the practical teaching and implementation of the three primary elements of family worship, participants took the family worship survey again to measure any changes in current practice.

After administering the pre-test and post-test surveys, I evaluated the results using a paired *t*-test to measure a statistically significant change in family worship practices of the participants. I considered this goal met when the mean of the pre-test and post-test results of the participants increased from 125 to 134.14.

Strengths of the Project

This ministry project had considerable strengths. First, the ministry project launched the initial steps to developing a culture of family worship at FBCK. Conversations with families prior to the study and the administration of the pre-test surveys revealed family worship was not actively occurring in the homes of FBCK families. As a result of this project, seven families have committed to regularly engage in the practice of family worship in their own homes. Prior to this ministry project, those engaging in family worship did not realize the potential impact and opportunity of encouraging other families

² See appendix 2.

to practice family worship. This project challenged each member of the study to deeply consider God's command to teach one's child to know and love God with diligence. It is with great excitement and assurance that FBCK is taking steps to develop families that glorify God not just in the church, but at home.

The second strength was the depth of biblical examples included in the family worship curriculum. My hope was that every session would be centered on God's Word so that each member of the study would view family worship as a biblical tool to assist parents in the spiritual training of their children. Spiritual training does not rest in humanity's lofty wisdom, but in the Word of God. Only the Bible, through the power of the Holy Spirit, possesses the ability to transform hearts. I discussed with the participants from Second Timothy 3:16-17 that "all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Participants were encouraged to look to God's Word as the primary source of authority, which leads believers to live lives that honor God, especially in the home. As a result of this project, FBCK has a repeatable and helpful resource to encourage other families to engage with their children spiritually.

A third strength was the eagerness and interest of the participants. From the moment I approached the prospective participants about the study, all showed incredible interest and zeal. During the six weeks of the class, the members showed up on time with notebooks in hand and were seated ready to begin. During each session, members were engaged, asked questions, discussed with each other, and took notes. In every session a participant would share with elation that family worship was already impacting their home life and children. I had a table set out with resources on family worship, reading the Bible, prayer, and singing for the participants to use at each session. Every week resources were checked out and questions or comments based on what members had read and or implemented were received. Not only were participants eager to learn and grow, but a greater desire to encourage, teach, and share with other families in the church about

family worship began to emerge. Without the implementation of this project, many of those families would not be intentionally engaging their homes and others spiritually for the glory of Christ.

Weaknesses of the Project

There were also considerable weaknesses of the ministry project. The first weakness was the overall length of the family worship curriculum. I do not think that a study of six weeks is long enough to develop the discipline of family worship in the home, especially for men who have little to no experience in leading. As I began teaching the last three sessions on reading the Bible, prayer, and singing, it became apparent that many participants did not know what to read, how to exegete a text, nor how to pray outside of mealtimes and pre-scripted prayers at bedtime. Each primary element could have been strengthened with additional lessons focused on the application of those disciplines discussed in class.

The second weakness of the ministry project was that I included too many scriptural examples that the references overwhelmed participants. I should have focused on a few key verses which would have allowed me deeper exegesis. When going through the sessions, I had so much material and scripture that I ended up providing a broad brushstroke on biblical family worship principles instead of a deep dive of the key verses of Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Psalm 78:1-8, and Ephesians 6:1-4. I especially wanted to teach on Ephesians 6 to encourage the fathers participating of their role as the spiritual leaders in their home, but due to the other scriptural examples I had worked into the lesson, I was only able to spend a few moments on the text.

A third weakness of the project was that the class was limited to Sunday mornings during the Sunday school hour in the choir suite, which meant that people were entering and exiting at various times as well as the choir waiting to gain access to the room as we finished each class. This was distracting to me as a teacher and to the participants.

Many times individuals would come in and inquire about the class or ask when the choir could gain access.

What I Would Do Differently

Now that the ministry project is complete and I am able to assess various strengths and weaknesses, there are several changes I would make if I were to repeat teaching this curriculum. Many ideas that follow are related to the previously mentioned weaknesses. The first change I would address would be to lengthen the curriculum. The six-week intensive teaching was great, but the practice of family worship needs to have more time to become a discipline. A ten-week course would provide adequate additional time for the implementation and coaching of the families as they learn to lead in family worship. This timeline would include in-home studies where I would take part in and observe families, in addition to participants practicing family worship during the class time. This change would allow participants to have more time to apply the content that has been taught in a safe environment while also having ample time to provide constructive feedback.

The second change I would bring to this ministry project would be to plan more gathering times outside of the sessions to build relationships and practice the elements of family worship. Participants are busy with work, school, and family life, and childcare was needed since all participants had children under the age of ten. Each session began with a discussion as every family gave a brief recap of the family worship experience from the prior week. This dialogue gave a clear glimpse into what happened at home and it became evident that more modeling of family worship was needed. If I followed up during the week with in-home visits or met one-on-one with families during the week to provide specialized teaching, some of the frustrations and learning curve of leading family worship could have been diminished.

A third change I would implement would be to offer the family worship class to the entire church. This training would greatly increase the awareness and practice of

family worship in the lives of FBCK members. While offering the class churchwide, I would use myself and families who completed this ministry to adopt families taking the course for the purpose of developing a deeper and more personal training for family worship. Having the large group split into smaller family worship groups might have more significant impact on providing unique and specialized teaching and communication. With a larger group of fourteen people participating, one-on-one specialization and customization proved to be difficult. Each family has unique situations, and each participant varies in spiritual maturity. It was evident from the beginning of the first session who needed a little more teaching and encouragement in family worship. With the class being so large, special focus on individual family's needs could not be addressed in the allotted time, like I would have preferred. If personal adaptation of family worship proved to be difficult with fourteen participants, having more participants would certainly be a limitation. Therefore, smaller family worship groups formed from the large group might lead to deeper more fruitful adoptions of family worship as a spiritual discipline.

The last change of the ministry project would be the process of administering the post-surveys to the participants. Both the pre-test and post-test surveys were administered via pre-postmarked envelopes, which allowed participants to complete the survey, close the envelope, and mail it. I received all the pre-tests on time, however, the post-tests proved to be more difficult. While receiving ten of the post-tests on time, four were not delivered on time. I had to remind these four individuals on more than one occasion about completing the surveys. These gentle reminders worked, and I finally received all fourteen post-tests but not until after ten days of seeking a return. If I had offered the survey online, I might have received a swifter response from all participants.

Theological Reflections

The development and implementation of this ministry project has deepened my understanding and increased my zeal as a father and a pastor at FBCK to grow in the knowledge and love of God. Prior to this study, my understanding and practice of family

worship was limited and not a priority. As a result of discovering the biblical warrant and theological importance of family worship discussed in chapters 2 and 3, I was reminded that God commands His creation to worship Him. Not only does God command His people to worship Him as individuals and as the church, but families are to worship Him too.

Second, not only does God's creation have the duty and delight to worship Him, but God has also placed parents in the family to be the primary spiritual leaders in the home to teach and model a life that exists to know and love God. The father is the shepherd of his family, and it must be the duty of parents to see their primary role being the soul-care of their children. Parents are to view their family as a little flock of sheep while the parents serve as the shepherds of that little flock, providing all the needs. Current culture suggests that intellectual and physical needs are most important, succeeding in academics is priority, and being a moral, law-abiding citizen is the goal, but I submit that this study has proven that how a parent cares for the soul of the little child must be of first importance.

Third, the Word of God guides all aspects of family worship. In reading the Bible, praying, and singing, participants learned that the Word of God is the ultimate authority in the life of a believer. The revealed Scripture is the primary means in which believers know God and learn how to worship Him rightly. Participants were taught to use the passage that was read for the Bible reading as a guide for the family prayer time. Not only should Scripture be used to guide family prayer time, but participants learned to look at the lyrics of songs through a theological lens to test for biblical truth and accuracy. This insight connected with me personally in my desire to be more intentional in leading my family spiritually.

My last reflection was the benefit of reading the Bible, prayer, and singing. While teaching participants how to engage in these elements in different ways, it was a joy to see the excitement wash over the face of the members as they were eager to go home and implement each element in a new way. As the use of different types of prayers

were encouraged, participants grew in how they could communicate with God by offering prayers of adoration, thanksgiving, confession, petition, and invocation.

Personal Reflections

This ministry project brought challenges, renewed zeal as a husband, father, and pastor, and convicted me in countless ways regarding my lack in the intentional soul care of my family. It was not until seven years ago that I came across the practice known as family worship. I became a father six years ago and family worship has been an incredibly helpful tool to grow me spiritually and in developing spiritual disciplines in our family. Through this study I realized that I needed to be more intentional and interested in the discipleship of my children. Before this project, my family would read the Bible one or two times per week. Once I began a deeper study of family worship, I was convinced that I needed to do more so I began making a regular habit of reading God's Word, praying, and singing together five times per week. Twice a week, my family adopted the use of catechisms and Scripture memory and my children desired to have family worship every night, so much so that my children are used of the Lord to provide accountability for family worship when my wife and I are tired and are rushing to finish the day to put kids to bed.

Not only have I personally grown in the practice of family worship, but as a pastor of my church I have been reminded of the duty and delight in teaching and equipping members for the work of ministry (Eph 4:12). One of the greatest spiritual deserts can be found in the home. Watching how God used this study to train and deepen the faith of the fourteen participants brought great encouragement to me. These families had a great hunger for the Word of God and a deep desire to live for the Lord and honor Him through intentional parenting. As the class was going, many other families showed interest in me offering the class again. It would be a great joy and a tremendous opportunity to have this project continue to be used of the Lord to create and strengthen homes that live for the glory of God at FBCK.

Lastly, family worship is not a widely known practice where I live in the state of Texas. I knew I wanted to research and grow in the discipline of family worship but I thought there would not be much research to mine. At the time, I was only familiar with Donald S. Whitney and Joel Beeke's books on family worship, but when I came to seminary I discovered an entire culture of family worship and was exposed to endless volumes on family worship writings, especially from the Puritans. I had no idea that such a treasure chest on the topic of family worship was to be discovered in the Puritan writings. This ministry project exposed me to some incredible thinkers of the past and present which has been formational to me as a father, husband, and pastor.³

As I seek to lead my wife, children, and pastor FBCK well through family worship, the Lord is gracious and allows me to grow, learn, and worship Him when we are together. Our family has been impacted as we have more frequent and deeper spiritual conversations, my children are speaking Scripture from memory, and are singing songs of the faith. Family worship has changed my parenting perspective and deepened my understanding of God's expectation of me as a father and how I lead my children to know and love God. I am grateful to the Lord for His active work through the Word of God by the Holy Spirit. This is the Lord's doing and to Him be all the glory, honor, and praise.

Conclusion

God commands His children to know, love, and obey Him, and in the same way commands parents to teach their own children to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and might by knowing Him and doing what He commands. Family worship is a tool in which parents teach and model what it means to love Jesus. As shepherds of their little flocks engaged in the soul care of their children, parents should lead regular and intentional times where the entire family gathers to read the Bible, pray, and sing. The purpose of doing so is to bring glory to God in thought, word, and deed as each member of the family

³ Thinkers like Martin Luther, Richard Baxter, Thomas Doolittle, John G. Paton, Terry L. Johnson, and Jason Helopoulos.

grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. For family worship to become a regular practice among the families at FBCK, the pastoral staff must model such a commitment and work to teach, equip, and exhort families within the church to intentionally impact their homes for the glory of God. This ministry project has sparked a flame and many families are eager to take part in making their homes less like the world and more like Christ. May family worship continue to be a tool used in the Redeemer's hand to bring glory to Himself and may He produce mature, multiplying, faithful followers of Jesus Christ in the home led by humble and spiritually committed and equipped parents.

APPENDIX 1

FAMILY WORSHIP SURVEY (FWS)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current practice and attitude regarding family worship of the participant. This research is being conducted by Matthew Perkinson at First Baptist Church in Keller, Texas for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and 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 in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey, and entering your E-mail address below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

1. Email:
2. Set up your personal ID#
3. Do you agree to participate?
 Yes
 No
4. Are you a member of FBCK?
 Yes
 No
5. How long have you been a member of FBCK?
 Less than one year
 1 – 2 years
 3- 4 years
 5 or more years
6. What is your gender?
 Male
 Female
7. What is your marital status?
 Married
 Divorced
 Widowed
 Widower

8. Which best describes your age bracket?
 20 – 30 years
 31 – 40 years
 41 – 50 years
 51 years and above
9. How many dependents are in your home?
 1
 2
 3
 4 or more
10. What is the age range of dependents in your come? [Check all that apply]
 Newborn
 1 – 2 years
 3 – 5 years
 6 – 10 years
 11 – 18 years
 19 and above

Knowledge and Practice

- 1 Strongly Disagree
 2 Disagree
 3 Neutral
 4 Agree
 5 Strongly Agree

11. I believe that the primary source for understanding God is the Bible.
 Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
12. I am committed to growing in my personal relationship with Christ.
 Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
13. I am committed to modeling Christ-likeness to my family.
 Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
14. I believe God is the author of the family.
 Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
15. I believe God as the right to define the purpose of the family.
 Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
16. I believe the primary source for understanding my role as a parent is found in the Bible.
 Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
17. I believe my role as a parent is to submit to God’s Word regarding the purpose of the family.
 Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

18. I believe God commands parents to teach children His Word.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
19. I believe I am equipped to share the gospel with my child(ren).
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
20. I regularly engage my children in biblical and theological conversations.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
21. I am familiar with the term, family worship.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
22. FBCK places a high priority on the practice of family worship.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
23. I am familiar with resources to grow in my knowledge and practice of family worship.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
24. I am confident leading family worship in the home.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
25. I believe family worship will deepen my relationship with Jesus.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
26. I believe family worship will strengthen my marriage.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
27. I believe that family worship will cause my family to grow closer to God.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
28. Heads of households are the primary spiritual leaders in the home.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
29. The church and its pastors are primarily responsible for the spiritual maturity of my child(ren).
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Bible Reading

30. I have a consistent practice of reading the Bible on my own.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
31. My children see me have a regular time of reading the Bible.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
32. I am confident in my ability to teach the Bible to my children.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
33. Our family frequently reads the Bible at home.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Prayer

34. I have a consistent practice of prayer.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

35. My children see me pray regularly.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

36. Our family prays together regularly outside of mealtimes.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Singing

37. I have a consistent practice of singing worship music whether in the car or at home.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

38. Our family consistently sings songs of worship at home.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

39. I believe songs can be used as a means for memorizing Scripture.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

40. I believe songs are a great tool to teach theology to my children.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

APPENDIX 2

FAMILY WORSHIP CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following rubric was sent to four family worship experts to ensure the curriculum was theologically true in content and practical in its principles and application to fit the context of First Baptist Church in Keller, Texas. The panel was comprised of people who could provide scholarly critique either by their extensive ministry experience and/or academic accomplishments.

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Family Worship Curriculum Evaluation Rubric					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum is clearly relevant to family worship.					
Each lesson provides a clear biblical and theological basis for family worship.					
The curriculum clearly emphasizes the need for believers to practice family worship.					
The curriculum provides personal points for spiritual development for the believer.					
Each lesson contained a main theme.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Each lesson was clear with points of application.					
At the end of the course, participants will be better equipped to lead family worship in the home.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 3
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC RESPONSES
FROM EXPERT PANEL

The following rubrics were received from the expert panelists of David Toledo, Dustin Bruce, and Brad Brand.

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC FROM DAVID TOLEDO

Family Worship Curriculum Evaluation Rubric					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum is clearly relevant to family worship.				X	It is focused and direct. Clearly articulates the content.
Each lesson provides a clear biblical and theological basis for family worship.				X	
The curriculum clearly emphasizes the need for believers to practice family worship.			X		
The curriculum provides personal points for spiritual development for the believer.				X	The applicable nature of the content was evident.
Each lesson contained a main theme.			X		
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.			X		
Each lesson was clear with points of application.				X	The “what” was given but more “how” would have been helpful.
At the end of the course, participants will be better equipped to lead family worship in the home.			X		

Other Comments: Really fine work. This is a needed project and it demonstrates a well-considered grasp of the theological and pastoral elements. At times, it assumed a depth of knowledge that might not apply to every context. Great job!

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC FROM DUSTIN BRUCE

Family Worship Curriculum Evaluation Rubric					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum is clearly relevant to family worship.				X	
Each lesson provides a clear biblical and theological basis for family worship.				X	
The curriculum clearly emphasizes the need for believers to practice family worship.				X	
The curriculum provides personal points for spiritual development for the believer.			X		
Each lesson contained a main theme.				X	
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.				X	
Each lesson was clear with points of application.			X		
At the end of the course, participants will be better equipped to lead family worship in the home.				X	

Other Comments: The curriculum looks really strong overall. The take home family worship guides probably need a bit more detail. For example, I would make sure they have the lyrics to “God Is So Good” and not just point them to the song. Also, some applications questions could be helpful.

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC FROM BRAD BRAND

Family Worship Curriculum Evaluation Rubric					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum is clearly relevant to family worship.				X	Clearly explains what family worship is!
Each lesson provides a clear biblical and theological basis for family worship.				X	Identifies that family worship is seen throughout the Scripture.
The curriculum clearly emphasizes the need for believers to practice family worship.				X	Clearly answers the call to “make disciples.”
The curriculum provides personal points for spiritual development for the believer.				X	
Each lesson contained a main theme.				X	
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.				X	Homework was beneficial to put to practice what was taught.
Each lesson was clear with points of application.				X	Great layout...easy to follow!
At the end of the course, participants will be better equipped to lead family worship in the home.				X	

Other Comments: Consider different scripture memory technique to put before the families. Consider different catechisms for the families to utilize. In the family worship guide, there was not a prompt to do scripture memory or a catechism.

APPENDIX 4

FAMILY WORSHIP SERIES CURRICULUM EXAMPLES

Session 1: Demystifying Family Worship— The Fundamentals

Introduction: Explanation of my doctoral project and the course overview

Discussion:

As a parent, what are some burdens that either society or you place on yourself?

What comes to mind when you hear the term, “family worship?”

Purpose of this study:

To know what God expects of the family, mainly, in the training of our children by looking at His Word and studying how various theologians have interpreted God’s call for the family.

Three Desirable Outcomes:

1. To see our role as shepherds (especially us, dads).
2. To see our family as our little flock that we as moms and dads are primarily responsible for.
3. To gain a deeper understanding and perspective that our primary purpose as parents is the soul care of our children.

What is family worship?

Definition: “The joint worship rendered to God by all the members of one household.”

J.W Alexander

“An intentional moment when all the members of one household gather to meet with God by engaging in a time of reading the Bible, prayer, and singing.” **My Definition**

What is the goal of family worship?

To bring glory of God in thought, word, and deed as each member of the family grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Who is family worship for?

All family members living under one roof: dad, mom, brother, sister, step-siblings, step-parents, grandparent, and any friend spending the night. The term and command to engage in “Family Worship” will not be found in the Bible but the principle is found throughout Scripture.

I give a brief testimony of my personal journey to valuing and practicing family worship.

How is family worship accomplished – A Basic Overview

- **Read the Bible**
 - The Bible is the means in which God has revealed Himself. It is how we know Him and glorify Him. (2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 1; Psalm 119:5, 11, 160; John 17:17).
 - **2 Timothy 3:16-17:** ¹⁶“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”
 - **Psalm 119:11:** “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”
- **Prayer**
 - Jesus would pray often. If the second person of the Trinity needed time communing with God, how much more do we?
 - We are commanded to pray.
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:17:** “pray without ceasing.”
 - Context – putting on the armor of God. **Ephesians 6:18:** “praying at all times in the Spirit.”
 - Jesus taught his disciples to pray: Matthew 6:9-13 (The Lord’s Prayer).
- **Singing**
 - We have the duty and the delight to sing praises to God. (Psalm 9:2; 13:5-6; 47; 68:4-5; 95:1-5; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18-19; 1 Corinthians 14:15).
- **Catechisms**
 - A series of questions and answers on theological topics.
 - Merriam Webster defines catechism as a summary of religious doctrine often in the form of questions and answers.
- **Scripture Memory**
 - Jesus memorized Scripture as evidenced many times in the New Testament but especially during his temptation (Luke 4:1-13).
 - Equips believers to live in obedience to God’s commands - Psalm 119:9: “How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.”

- We are commanded to let Scripture dwell in us richly - Colossians 3:16

Why should I care about family worship?

- God cares about how He is worshiped (Deuteronomy 6:13; Luke 4:8; Job 42:7; Exodus 25-31; 35-40).
 - **Deuteronomy 6:13:** “It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear.”
 - **Job 42:7:** “After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: “My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.”
 - **Luke 4:8:** “And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ““You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.””
- God has tasked parents with the responsibility of being the primary conduit in which children learn to know and love God (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).
 - This is an incredible tool to speak of the Gospel often in the home.
 - Parents are tasked with taking care of their children.
 - **1 Timothy 5:8:** “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”
- An incredible way for children to learn to know and love God from the parents.
 - If parents don’t teach their children to know and love God, someone else will teach them what to know and what to love.
- Family worship provides a comfortable atmosphere for children to ask questions about God to their parents.
- This is a natural way for parents to provide biblical instruction to their children.
- There is no better way for the parents to discuss and show what it looks like to have a relationship with Jesus - Evangelism
- A natural way for the family to gather on a regular basis.
- Isn’t this what parents value most? That children will know and love the Lord all the days of their life?

Common objections or hindrances to family worship:

- I’m not a theologian or have a seminary degree, I’m not equipped for this.
- Our schedule is crazy already, how can we fit this in?
- Aren’t my children too young?
- My children are older now, is it too late for us?
- My children are various ages. How can I lead them all?
- How long should family worship be?
- How often should we have a time of family worship?
- Where do we have family worship?
- What if my children are not Christians?
 - Family worship is NOT a guarantee that your children will become Christians but you are always planting a seed. You are honoring the Lord by raising your child in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, the results are in His hands.

KEY NOTE: Family Worship CAN be done by all parents and children of all ages can be engaged and taught.

- Family worship is NOT easy; it is a discipline.
- Family worship is a simple, it is not complex, but difficult to put into practice intentionally and consistently – One thing I say often about myself is that I am consistently inconsistent.

In this class, we will consider the biblical, historical, and practical implications regarding family worship and hope to refine and adopt helpful tools as we seek to encourage the worship of God in our homes.

Discussion:

Participants: Please give some background as to what family worship practices looked like in your home growing up?

Homework:

- Talk with your spouse and children about engaging in family worship. Begin praying together as to how this practice might impact your family.
- If you have not been practicing family worship, have a time of Bible reading, prayer, and singing two times this week. Make notes on what went well and what proved to be a struggle or awkward. (You may use the Family Worship Service Handout provided).
- If you have been practicing family worship, aim for a time of Bible reading, prayer, and singing three to five times this week. Make notes on what went well and what proved to be a struggle or awkward.

Living, modeling, and teaching how to live a life of godliness is too great for us, let's seek the Lord and ask for His help – **Closing Prayer.**

Session 2: Building a Biblical Foundation for Family Worship

Discussion:

Begin the session following up on the previous homework questions for discussion:

- Talk with your spouse and children about engaging in family worship. How'd this go?
- Did you have a times of family worship this week? How'd it go?

What is family worship?

Definition: “The joint worship rendered to God by all the members of one household.”

J.W Alexander

“An intentional moment when all the members of one household gather to meet with God by engaging in a time of reading the Bible, prayer, and singing.” **My Definition.**

Remember Our Three Desirable Outcomes:

1. To see our role as shepherds (especially us, dads).
2. To see our family as our little flock that we as moms and dads are primarily responsible for.
3. To gain a deeper understanding and perspective that our primary purpose as parents is the soul care of our children.

The term and command to engage in “Family Worship” will not be found in the Bible but the principle is found throughout Scripture and that’s what we’re going to be exploring today.

The Biblical Warrant:

- **We are called/commanded to worship God:**
 - **Deuteronomy 6:13:** “It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear.”
 - **Luke 4:8:** “And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ““You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.””
- **Abraham – Genesis 18:17-19 (Before God’s judgment against Sodom and Gomorrah.**
 - ¹⁷ The Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, ¹⁸ seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹ For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.”
 - The Lord did not hide what He was about to do to Sodom and Gomorrah from Abraham but used it as a means for Abraham to teach his children about the character of the Lord and to obey Him.

- **Abraham – Genesis 22:6-7 (Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac)**
 - ⁶ And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. ⁷ And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”
 - The story of Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. We read in this passage that Isaac knew that everything was present for the sacrifice except the lamb. How did Isaac know they did not have everything necessary? Isaac knew this because he had witnessed his father prepare and offer the sacrifices multiple times.. Isaac knew when an element of worship was missing because Abraham led his family to worship God.
- **Job 1:1-5**
 - There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. ² There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. ³ He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. ⁴ His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵ And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, “It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job did continually.
 - This selection illustrates Job understanding that he was to watch over the souls of his children. Not only was he concerned for his own standing before God but was extremely concerned with his children’s standing before God.
- **Joshua 24:14-15**
 - ¹⁴ “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. ¹⁵ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”
 - Take note of not just the commitment to serve the Lord personally, but his commitment to lead his family to serve the Lord. He committed that his family would worship God. It is evident that Joshua knew he was responsible for the soul care of his children.
 - Joshua is more than 100 years old at this time. We also see that at least one generation followed his example after him.
 - Verse 31 shows that home worship continued after Joshua. “³¹ Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the Lord did for Israel.”

- **Application:** Fathers, mothers, in our homes, may we seek the Lord, serve, and worship Him!
- **Moses - Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Reveals that Family Worship involves biblical and theological reflection**
 - ⁴“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.
 - **God is clear, He is the one and only true God (verse 4).**
 - He is sovereign, omniscient, and omnipotent.
 - **God commands His people to know and love Him (verse 5).**
 - The task to parents: know God and teach God according to His revealed Word.
 - **Three Responses to who God is (verses 6-7):**
 - **Individual:** Loving God with one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength.
 - **Familial:** Teaching children to love God with diligence, in all places, and at all time.
 - **Communal (verses 8-9):** the physical reminders given in these verses were to be an ever-present memorial to the Israelite of His relationship to God and the debt of gratitude he owes to the LORD. Furthermore, these were an outward sign to the community of one’s commitment to love God which created a community of accountability.
 - **Application:**
 - Parents are to teach the things of God at every opportunity.
 - They should do so with their children individually and communally.
 - This teaching is done consistently and intentionally.
- **Asaph -Psalm 78:1-8 calls parents to teach the next generation to hope in God and live in obedience. (have someone read)**
 - Asaph was one of the three leaders of tabernacle music appointed by King David.
 - God commands for the heads of the household to tell the coming generation of the deeds of the LORD.
 - Most of this teaching was accomplished in the home and lives of the families.
 - We see in verse 1 that godly wisdom first comes from knowing and heeding the Word of God.
 - Verses 2-4 reveals the dark history of Israel. They lacked faithfulness to God and were full of sin but the Psalmist highlights God’s character. That He remains faithful, kind, and long-suffering but that does not mean he has turned a blind eye to Israel’s sinfulness. The Psalmist is transparent

about His people's sin and commits to not shield those details from the next generation.

- Verse 5 gives specific examples of the wonders God has done.
- Verse 6 the Psalmist says that the reason is so the next generation might know the past, know the character and nature of God so that they would put their hope in him and live in obedience (verses 7 and 8).
- **Application:** Parents, how are you encouraging your children to hope in God despite your sinfulness and the sinfulness of your family?
- **Paul -Ephesians 6:1-4 calls fathers to be the primary family worship leaders in the home.**
 - "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."
 - Children are to obey their parents (verse 1) for it is right.
 - Children are to honor their father and mother which harkens back to the fifth commandment given in Exodus 20. For children to know what it means to obey in a way that honors God, parents must teach and model this behavior biblically.
 - In verse 4, Paul shifts his focus to the role of the father and his relationship with the children. The expectation is that the father is to lead in raising his children.
 - Do not provoke them to anger. Instead, bring them in up the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
 - The father is to promote godliness and not be the reason for increasing his children's sin account.
 - There is a contrast here: one of destruction caused by tearing down and the other of building up.
 - The father is not to overlook sinful behavior but to admonish and encourage right living.
 - Therefore, the father is to instruct and teach his children in the way that God teaches and His children. Fathers are to find their motives in teaching and disciplining their children to glorify God and to encourage Christ-honoring living in their children.
 - **Application:** Fathers, what are your motives when you discipline your children? Behavior modification? That quick fix or are you after soul care and transformation?

Discussion:

- Parents, we pass on what we love and value. What are you teaching your child to love and value? Does what you say to them match what you are modeling for them? Are you revealing that you are loving God with your heart, soul, mind, and strength? What action steps can you take to grow in this?
- Are you diligently teaching your children to know and love God?
- The Psalmist was willing to admit his sinfulness and the sinfulness of his fathers for the sake of teaching the next generation of God's goodness, holiness, and his constant need for God.

- Do you admit to your children when you sin?
- Are you quick to ask their forgiveness when you have wronged them? Do you openly admit your constant need for Jesus?
- Fathers, do you exasperate your children? If so, what are some action steps you need to take to step up and build up your family?
- Wives, how can you encourage your husband to grow in leading his family in the discipline instruction of the Lord?

Closing Thought: While the term family worship is not found in the Bible, the few passages (and there are so many more) we have surveyed are abundantly clear that God expects parents: dads and moms to lead and teach their children to know God, to put their hope and trust in Him. Family worship is a tool, a habit, a discipline that we use to engage our children in an intentional way to point them AND us to Jesus. If you believe the Bible, then you must be convinced that God deserves to be worshiped in the home.

Homework:

- Lead your family in a time of Bible reading, prayer, and singing at least two times this week. Make notes on what went well and what proved to be a struggle or awkward. (You may use the Family Worship Service Handout provided).

Living, modeling, and teaching how to live a life of godliness is too great for us, let's seek the Lord and ask for His help – **Closing Prayer.**

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A FAMILY WORSHIP CURRICULUM FOR FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN KELLER, TEXAS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Dustin B. Bruce

This project sought to increase family worship practices in the homes of church members of First Baptist Church in Keller, Texas. Chapter 1 presents the ministry context, rationale, and methodology for this project. Chapter 2 provides the biblical warrant for the project. In looking at Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Psalm 78:1-8, and Ephesians 6:1-4, it is clear that every parent is commanded to teach their children to know and love God. Chapter 3 synthesizes three family worship scholars' viewpoints on the scripture passages emphasized in chapter 2 that inspired the methodology and the creation and implementation of the curriculum for this project. Chapter 4 describes each step leading up to the implementation of the curriculum and a detailed overview of the implementation process used for this project. Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the effectiveness of the project when compared to the set goals. This project developed and encouraged a culture of family worship to grow mature, multiplying followers of Christ at First Baptist Church in Keller, Texas.

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