

OUR DAILY FAMILY WORSHIP (A PERSONAL TESTIMONY) --

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George Jameson, the great-grandfather of this present writer, was a very fiery preacher. However, after his tragic death, his children (including Elizabeth Jameson Lee) drifted away from the Lord. So too did her children, including my own father William Sydney Lee. Thus it was that my own father, William Sydney Lee, was raised without the Bible -- and himself married a Roman Catholic, Alice Maud Smith. I am their only child, and I too was raised without the Bible – till seven as a Roman Catholic (when my mother and I drifted away from the Church), and after that as an atheist.

Many years later, the daughter of my grandmother Elizabeth Jameson Lee became a Christian, and then led her mother to the Lord. That mother, my grandmother, later came to live with my parents when I was about thirteen years of age. Subsequently, I myself became a Christian. Then my grandmother and I would go to her bedroom every day and read the Bible together and pray for the conversion of my parents. My grandmother never lived to see it happen. But after her death, all of her prayers were answered positively.

In God's pre-ordained time, and while still living in my parents' home, I had the great joy of leading both my father and my mother to Christ. The altar of daily family worship -- which had been broken down since the death of my great-grandfather George Jameson in 1923 -- was then rebuilt also in my parents' home. *Cf.* Malachi 4:4-6 & Luke 1:16f.

I then met wife Nellie, who had been raised on a farm by Christian parents practising daily family worship. We were married in 1963. Ever since our wedding, we have held family devotions together in own home -- every day, morning and evening. Whenever I have been overseas preaching and/or lecturing, Nellie has faithfully continued the daily family worship at home with our children till I have returned and taken over the leadership.

Generally, we have read from the Old Testament every morning, and from the New Testament every evening. Thus, ever since the conceptions of our two children Johanna and Annamarie and even before their births, not one day has passed when those children have not themselves participated (morning and evening) in this daily family worship -- for as long as they have been under our roof, and even today every time they come and visit us. Psalm 22:9-10; 139:7-17; Luke 1:36-45; Romans 11:16; First Corinthians 7:14.

Practically since their births, our children have had and used their own Bibles and their own Psalter Hymnals and Catechism Books even at daily family worship. See Second Timothy 1:3-5.

They learned to read not a „Childrens' Bible” (*sic!*) But the Holy Bible itself as their very first book, long before starting to go to school. Second Timothy 3:14-16f. As soon as they could, they were asked to read one verse of it out loud -- at daily family worship. See Matthew 21:16.

Thus, over the years, every member of our family has read out loud, before the others, one

verse each -- every morning, and every evening. Isaiah 8:20 *cf.* 28:13. This, of course, is in addition to a short family prayer before every meal (First Timothy 4:3-5); and also in addition to his or her own personal devotions when each is alone (Matthew 6:6).

In this way, since the arrival of the last addition to the family -- during daily household devotions, the entire Bible has been covered. This has been done: at some depth; in chronological order; down through the years. Revelation 1:3 & 22:17-19.

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Here is a typical morning family worship session -- after breakfast, and before leaving the home. The father prays a very short opening prayer. *Cf.* Psalm 119:107. The whole family then sings a small portion of one Psalm all together. Psalm 147:1. The father then reads one verse of Scripture out loud -- generally from the Old Testament. *Cf.* Luke 24:27f,44f. The other members of the family do likewise, in sequential order. *Cf.* Matthew 19:4f & Luke 1:1-4.

The father then explains the few verses read. *Cf.* Second Peter 3:16. Each family member then says what new thing he or she has learned. *Cf.* Acts 8:30-36. If the Bible passage is too profound, only one verse -- or even only part of one verse -- will be explained at that session. *Cf.* Matthew 5:18. The family then kneels down together. *Cf.* Psalm 95:6. The father then asks only one of them to pray, shortly, for the family's special needs that day. *Cf.* Nehemiah 1:11 *etc.*

At night, right after the evening meal, a somewhat similar pattern is followed. Deuteronomy 6:6f *cf.* Psalm 55:17. Now, however, the worship can be longer -- as there is no need to rush off from home to work or school. *Cf.* Psalm 1:2 & Acts 17:11 *etc.*

The only differences in the evening pattern, are the following. The reading is generally now from the New Testament, not the Old. John 16:13f *cf.* Second Peter 1:13-16 & 3:15f. The portion sung is from a Scriptural Hymn or Paraphrase, not from a Psalm. Ephesians 5:18-25 & 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:16-21. And, after the explanation of the Scripture -- one question and answer of the *Shorter Catechism* is propounded, explained, and then jointly recited. *Cf.* Proverbs 22:6 margin & First Timothy 6:12f.

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This, then -- Praise, Scripture, Prayer -- is the pattern of our daily family worship. Praise -- for "the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the dwellings of the justified." Psalm 118:15. Scripture -- for those whom Christ has made "noble" are to "receive the Word" with "all readiness of mind," and to "search the Scriptures daily." Acts 17:11. And Prayer -- for "fathers, bring up your children..., praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit!" Ephesians 6:4,18.

Suggestions

Perhaps, dear reader, you have never before enjoyed the blessed practice of daily family worship -- but now seen that God is urging you to start. In that case, the following suggestions are made to help you commence. It is to be remembered that just a little each day, is far better than a lot only once a week on Sundays.

At the risk of sounding 'methodistic' we will now propose some 'methods' to assist those who want to commence daily family worship. These are only suggestions, but we believe their implementation -- or that of something similar -- will prove to be a rich blessing to any home.

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First, get these four following books (preferably with copies for each member of your family): The Holy Bible (the New King James Version is recommended); The Psalter (the 150 Psalms of David set to music); The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (preferably an edition with Biblical proof-texts); and a good Hymn Book (such as the *American Trinity Hymnal* or the *Australian Rejoice!*).

Second, get your family to bed at a decent hour -- preferably before eleven at night.

Third, set your alarm clock for the next morning at fifteen minutes earlier than in the past. Then, next day:

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- A.**
 1. Get your family up some fifteen minutes earlier than has been usual.
 2. Right after eating breakfast together, possibly before leaving the table, let the family head pray a very short prayer for illumination, and then read just one verse from the Bible out loud. We suggest Genesis 1:1.
 3. The family head should then ask each member of the household, in turn, what he or she has just learned. Each should answer just for himself or herself, in front of the rest of the family.
 4. The family head should then provide each member with a psalter or a hymnbook. It is suggested that the first stanza of Psalm 1 be sung by all.
 5. The family head should then pray for the whole household, that God will use each in His service that day -- or ask another member to do so.

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In the evening, the following daily pattern may prove useful to commence and inculcate the practice of daily family worship.

- B.**
 1. Serve the evening meal some fifteen minutes earlier than in the past, or instead lengthen

the duration of the family worship together immediately thereafter.

2. Right after enjoying the evening meal together, and possibly before leaving the table, let the head of the household pray a short prayer for illumination and then read out loud just one verse from the Bible. John 1:1 is suggested.

3. The family head should then ask each member of the household, in turn, what he or she has just learned. Each should answer just for himself or herself, in front of the rest of the family.

4. The family head should then provide each member with a psalter or a hymnbook. We suggest the first stanza of the first hymn be sung by all.

5. The family head should then ask the first question in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, of one member of the family. The family head should explain the meaning of the question and, after the answer has been given correctly, he should further explain the meaning of the answer. The entire family should then be asked to give the correct answer in unison.

6. The family head should then ask each member what he or she ended up achieving for the Lord that day. He should then thank God for using them each and all, and petition the Lord to give them a good night's rest -- or ask another member to do so -- so that they may each continue to serve the Lord also on the morrow.

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C. Next morning, **A** should be followed as above, but substituting Genesis 1:2 instead of Genesis 1:1, and Psalm 2 instead of Psalm 1.

D. In the evening, **B** should be followed as above, but substituting John 1:2 instead of John 1:1; Hymn 2 instead of Hymn 1; and Question & Answer 2 of the Catechism instead of 1.

E. On the third day, make like adjustments to those suggested in **C** and **D** above -- and likewise, also as regards the fourth and each subsequent day.

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In Exodus 36:3, we read that God's children brought 'free offerings every morning.' Here, the Rev. Dr. Matthew Henry rightly remarks in his famous *Commentary on the Holy Bible*: "We should always make it our morning's work to bring our offering unto the Lord -- even the spiritual offerings of prayer and praise, and a broken heart surrendered entirely to God. This is that which the duty of every day requires. God's compassions are new every morning [Lamentations 3:22f], and so should our offerings be -- our free offerings."

Mutatis mutandis, the same applies also every evening. Indeed, Daniel's greatest prayer was offered to God precisely at the time of the evening oblation. Daniel 9:3-21 (cf. 6:10-13). Again, Rev. Dr. Matthew Henry comments: "The altar was in ruins, and there was no oblation

offered upon it. But, it should seem, the pious Jews in their captivity were daily thoughtful of the time when it should have been offered, and at that hour were ready...and desired and hoped that their prayer should be set forth before God as incense, and the lifting up of...their hearts...should be acceptable in His sight as the evening sacrifice."

For even Adam and Eve worshipped God together, in the morning and in the evening. Genesis 2:22f & 3:8f. Job's family too worshipped the Lord early in the morning, all the days. Job 1:5. Abraham, the father of all believers, commanded his household regularly to "keep the way of the Lord." Genesis 18:18f cf. 14:13f with Romans 4:11 and Galatians 3:6-8 & 3:16-18 & 3:27-29. Moses required home devotions from all of God's covenant people, every morning and every evening. Deuteronomy 6:7f. Too, Joshua (24:15) and David (Second Samuel 6:14-20) similarly complied.

Indeed, the busy David made time to worship the Lord thrice daily -- and lifted up his hands in prayer, especially at his evening sacrifice. Psalms 55:17 & 141:2. Fearful of God's curse on those families that do not worship Him (Jeremiah 10:25), the devout Cornelius prayed to God at stated times with all his household -- always. Acts 10:2f cf. 10:30. Indeed, Jesus Himself -- in Matthew 6:11 & Luke 11:3 -- taught all His disciples to pray: "Our heavenly Father! ... Keep on giving us, this day, our daily bread!"

May we too, then -- with all our household -- do likewise! Let us catechize our families, daily, in our homes! Let us then start, and then continue, to worship the Lord -- through singing His praises, through praying to Him, and through reading God's Word -- morning and evening, every day of our lives!