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PLANNING FAMILY WORSHIP

By

Junette Wade

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To
Mother and Dad

Gift of the Author

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

- A. Statement and Delimitation of the Problem 11
- B. Significance of the Problem 111
- C. Method of Procedure 111
- D. Sources of Data 1v

CHAPTER I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILY WORSHIP

- A. Introduction 2
- B. The Nature of Family Worship 3
- C. Historical Development of Family Worship 4
 - 1. In the Old Testament 4
 - 2. In the Early Christian Church 5
 - 3. In the Protestant Church 7
- D. Factors in the Recent Development of Family Worship 9
 - 1. Changes in Home Life 10
 - a. Changes resulting from the new industrial order 10
 - b. Changes caused by the contemporary philosophy of life 14
 - 2. Changes in the Attitude Toward Religion 16
 - a. Religious concepts are in flux 17
 - b. The church has taken over the parents' responsibility 18
- E. Summary 20

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CHAPTER II

THE VALUES AND AIMS OF FAMILY WORSHIP

A.	Introduction	23
B.	Values of Family Worship in the Present Day . .	24
1.	Values of Worship	25
a.	Provides fellowship with God	25
b.	Releases spiritual energies for Christian living	26
c.	Aids in the solution of problems	26
d.	Gives meaning and value to life	27
2.	The Values of Family Worship.	27
a.	Values of family worship for the individual	28
(1)	Relates God and worship to daily life and problems.	28
(2)	Trains in the art of worshipping	29
(3)	Is a means of Christian education	31
b.	Values of family worship for the home	33
(1)	Unifies the family	34
(2)	Symbolizes the sacredness of the home	35
(3)	Prepares the family for emergencies	35
(4)	Makes the home a more pleasant place in which to live	35
c.	Values of family worship for the Church	36
(1)	Aids in producing a strong and vital church life	36
(2)	Aids in producing leaders in the church	37
(3)	Prepares the way for public worship	38
C.	The Aims of Family Worship	39
1.	The Necessity and Purpose of Aims	39
a.	The value of aims	39
b.	The selection of aims	40
c.	The use of aims in planning the worship experience	42

2.	Statement of the Aims for Family Worship	43
a.	Aims in relation to the individual	44
	(1) To provide for each individual a growing experience of personal fellowship with God in an atmosphere of daily living and with the group of people with whom he shares many daily experiences	44
	(2) To focus the teachings of God's Word on daily life and to find guidance for specific problems	45
	(3) To release daily in each individual's life the power which comes through united prayer	46
	(4) To reinforce the work of the church	47
b.	Aims in relation to the home	49
	(1) To foster in each individual an awareness of the presence of God in the home	49
	(2) To provide an expressions of the unity of the family in their Christian faith	51
	(3) To make possible happy and harmonious relationships in the daily life of the home	52
	(4) To enrich experiences or occasions of special significance for the family by sharing a spiritual experience based on them	54
D.	Summary	55

CHAPTER III

PRINCIPLES AND MATERIALS

FOR PLANNING FAMILY WORSHIP

A.	Introduction	58
B.	The Psychological Elements in Family Fellowship	59
1.	The Ages of Members of the Family Usually Include a Wide Span	59

2.	The Family May Have A Non-Cooperating Member .	61
3.	The Family May Find It Difficult To Be Together	65
4.	Members of the Family Know Each Other Intimately	68
5.	The Family Often Has Guests	69
C.	Principles To Be Observed in Planning Family Worship	71
1.	Family Worship Should Be Adapted to the Varying Age Levels in the Group	71
2.	Family Worship Should Be Related To Life . . .	73
3.	Family Worship Should Be Related to the Total Worship Experience of Members of the Family	75
4.	Family Worship Should Be Varied in Form and Content	76
5.	Family Worship Should Provide for Wide Participation	80
D.	Materials of Worship And Their Use in Family Worship	82
1.	Scripture	82
a.	The place of Scripture in family worship .	82
b.	The selection of Scripture for family worship	83
c.	The use of Scripture in family worship . .	87
2.	Prayer	89
a.	The place of prayer in family worship . .	89
b.	Characteristics of family prayer	89
c.	The content of family prayer	90
3.	Music	93
a.	The place of music in family worship . . .	93
b.	The selection of music for family worship	93
c.	The use of music in family worship	95
4.	Stories	96
a.	The place of stories in family worship . .	96
b.	The selection of stories for family worship	96
c.	The use of stories in family worship . . .	97

5.	Poetry	97
	a. The place of poetry in family worship . .	97
	b. The selection of poetry for family worship	98
	c. The use of poetry in family worship . . .	98
6.	Devotional Materials	98
	a. The place of devotional materials in family worship	98
	b. The selection of devotional materials for family worship	99
	c. The use of devotional materials in family worship	100
7.	Pictures	100
	a. The place of pictures in family worship	100
	b. The selection of pictures for family worship	101
	c. The use of pictures in family worship .	101
8.	Conversation and Discussion	102
3.	Summary	103

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A.	Summary	106
B.	Conclusion	109

BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

PLANNING FAMILY WORSHIP

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement and Delimitation of the Problem

Many Christian people who recognize the need for and value of family worship still do not have it regularly in their homes. One of the answers most frequently given to the question "Why?" is: "We do not know how to plan family worship. We have tried in the past and failed." Or another answer may be: "We do not have the time to spend in family worship which our parents had." The purpose of this thesis is to consider how the family may plan worship in a way that has meaning and value and is adapted to the life of the modern family.

In this study it will be necessary to limit the field to the worship experiences in the family. That is, the program of Christian nurture in the home will not be considered except that part of it which is included in family worship. It will also be necessary to limit this study to the worship experiences which the family has as a group. Therefore the study of individual personal devotions, while related to this problem, will not be made here.

B. Significance of the Problem

This study will be of use to families in planning their own worship or to pastors and directors of religious education in making suggestions to families who desire help in planning family worship. Although there are books available which outline plans for family worship, it is felt that suggestions which the family may use in planning its own creative worship will be of value.

C. Method of Procedure

The first consideration in this study will be the development of family worship. Following a brief definition of family worship, its historical development will be traced and the factors influencing its recent development considered. The second step will be an investigation of the values of family worship for the present day; on the basis of these values and the needs of the modern family the comprehensive aims of family worship will then be stated. The final chapter will be a study of the psychological elements in family fellowship, a statement of the principles to be kept in mind in planning family worship experiences, and suggestions for the selection and use of various materials in family worship.

D. Sources of Data

In gathering material for this study, books relating to family life in general will be scanned to determine the opinions of various writers regarding the place and value of worship in the home. At the same time books in the field of worship will be examined to discover the emphasis given to family worship in the total program of worship. Then books dealing more specifically with the problems of Christian family life, particularly the training of children in the Christian home, will be read for their suggestions regarding family worship. Finally books, pamphlets, and material in periodicals on family worship will be used as a primary source. In discussing the aims, principles, and materials for family worship, sources on these subjects for worship in general will be studied and applied to family worship.

In addition to library material, recent publications on the subject of family life and family worship will be secured from the denominational book-stores of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the Methodist Church, the Northern Baptist Convention, the United Lutheran Church in America, the Church of the Brethren, and from the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America and the Protestant Council of the City of New York.

CHAPTER I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILY WORSHIP

CHAPTER I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILY WORSHIP

A. Introduction

In approaching the problem of planning family worship, it is essential to understand clearly what is meant by the term "family worship" as it will be used in this study. For this purpose a definition of family worship will be given, and some of the forms which it may take briefly considered.

The next step is to trace the historical development of family worship as it was found in Old Testament times, the days of the early Christian Church, and the period following the Protestant Reformation. Such a study will reveal the place which has been given to family worship by former generations.

With this background in mind, factors which have influenced the recent development of family worship can be considered in order to discover the reason for the present-day decline in the number of Christian homes which have family worship. These factors will be grouped according to the changes which have taken place in home life and changes in the attitude toward religion.

This chapter will prepare the way for understanding the problems to be faced in planning family worship for the modern family.

B. The Nature of Family Worship

"Family worship . . . is the joint worship rendered to God, by all the members of one household."¹ This statement from a book written one hundred years ago was the simplest definition found. But immediately the question may be asked: What is worship? Barclay defines worship as an "experience of fellowship with God . . ."² So we may define family worship as all the members of a family group joining together in an experience of fellowship with God.

A term which is frequently applied to family worship is "the family altar." Of course the word altar does not signify an actual material altar installed as a piece of furniture in the home. Rather the word signifies the presence of God in the home.³ It is taken from the patriarchal custom of the Old Testament of erecting an altar at which to worship. When a family begins the practice of family worship, they are said to be "establishing a family altar."

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1. J. W. Alexander: Thoughts on Family Worship, p. 9.
2. W. C. Barclay: The Church and a Christian Society, p. 203.
3. Cf. P. D. Brown: The Christian Home, p. 77.

The experience of family worship may take many and varied forms. The blessing spoken before each meal is family worship. The bedside prayers of the children are family worship when the children are small and the entire family participates. But as the children grow old enough to have their own private devotions before retiring, there arises a need for a more complete expression of the family worship than is possible at these times. The term "family worship" as used in this thesis refers to the experience, be the time long or brief and the form simple or elaborate, when the family comes together for the stated purpose of worshiping God as a family.

C. Historical Development of Family Worship

1. In the Old Testament

When we look into the Old Testament for family worship, we discover the principle of family worship appearing and reappearing, rather than particular instances.¹

"Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah: and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for

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1. Cf. Alexander: op. cit., p. 12.

frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates."¹

These often-quoted words of Moses tell us that the religion of the Hebrews was a family religion. Each father was responsible for the religious instruction and nurture of his children. It is true that the priests were God's appointed ministers and the Tabernacle was the center of worship, the people being forbidden to offer sacrifices elsewhere. Nevertheless the Passover feast, one of the most significant for the Hebrews, was celebrated in the home by each family.²

Alexander tells of the ritual which was observed in many orthodox Jewish homes in Europe, even as late as the middle of the last century.³ This ritual includes ceremonies for both morning and evening.

2. In the Early Christian Church

When we move into the Christian era, we find that the home was a center of worship. Although at first the Christians worshipped in the temple and the synagogues, persecution by the Jews soon made it impossible to worship in these places. The Christians went into private homes.⁴

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1. Deuteronomy 6:4-9.
2. Cf. Exodus 12:3, 4, 7-11.
3. Cf. Alexander: op. cit., p. 15.
4. Cf. Acts 5:24.

Thus Paul at Corinth went into the home of Justus when he was driven out of the synagogue.¹

The unity of the family in religious matters is illustrated by several instances recorded in Acts. There we read that Cornelius, the Roman centurion at Caesarea, was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house . . ." ² He gathered all of his kinsmen and friends to his home to hear Peter's message.³ When Paul was in Philippi, two families were converted as a group. One was the family of Lydia.⁴ The other was that of the Philippian jailor to whom Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house."⁵ He and "all that were in his house" heard the words of Paul that night and both he and "all his" were baptized the same hour of the night.⁶ These instances may not be interpreted as proving that these families observed family worship as we think of it, but they show the unity of the family in religious observances.

Until the third century there were no special buildings for churches. Christian worship was held in private homes.⁷ The house of Philemon in Colossae was a

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1. Cf. Acts 18:7.
2. Acts 10:2.
3. Cf. Acts. 10:24.
4. Cf. Acts 16:15.
5. Acts 16:31.
6. Acts 16:33.
7. Cf. C. E. Jefferson: Quiet Talks with the Family, pp. 11, 12.

center for Christianity in that community, for Paul sent greetings to the church in his house.¹ Aquila and Priscilla made their home a center of worship wherever they were. When Paul wrote to the church in Rome, he sent special greetings to the church in their house.²

Someone may ask: "Just what form did family worship in these early Christian homes take?" Alexander quotes from The Antiquities of the Christian Church this description of family worship at this period:

"At an early hour in the morning, the family were assembled, when a portion of Scripture was read from the Old Testament, which was followed by a hymn and a prayer, in which thanks were offered up to the Almighty for preserving them during the silent watches of the night, and for his goodness in permitting them to meet in health of body, and soundness of mind; and at the same time his grace was implored to defend them amid the dangers and temptations of the day, to make them faithful to every duty, and enable them in all respects to walk worthy of their Christian vocation. In the evening, before retiring to rest, the family again assembled, when the same form of worship was observed as in the morning, with this difference, that the service was considerably protracted beyond the period which could conveniently be allotted to it in the commencement of the day."³

3. In the Protestant Church

Even before the time of Luther, the Waldensians, though constantly persecuted, held to the practice of

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1. Cf. Philemon 1:2.
2. Cf. Romans 16:5.
3. Alexander: op. cit., pp. 20-21. From Lyman Coleman: The Antiquities of the Christian Church, second edition, p. 375.

family worship.¹ This group of dissenters from the Roman Catholic Church, in France and Italy, sought to revive primitive pureness of living.

With the Protestant Reformation, new life was infused into the church, and as was to be expected, family worship revived. The biographers of Luther have given us intimate glimpses of his home life. His high regard for family life was revealed when he said, "The world has, next to God's Word no greater treasure than the holy state of matrimony . . ."² Some of his prayers have been recorded, and some of his loveliest songs are the ones he composed for his children. He himself taught them to pray, to sing, and to recite the catechism.³

In Scotland, family worship was practically universal. Robert Burns has given us a picture of this traditional observance in "The Cotter's Saturday Night." Historians tell us that this picture is not exaggerated.⁴ The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland issued a Directory for Family Worship in 1647.⁵ This directory gave specific suggestions and patterns for the conduct of family worship.

History reveals that in its most deeply spiritual periods the voice of the Church has favored and encouraged

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1. Cf. E. K. Ziegler: *Worship in the Christian Home*, p. 6.
2. Julius Kostlin: *The Life of Martin Luther*, pp. 461-462.
3. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 463.
4. Cf. Alexander: *op. cit.*, p. 27.
5. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

family worship.¹ Rufus M. Jones, writing about religion and family life, says:

"Whenever there has been profound religious life in any nation, race, or people, there has always been behind it a deep and pervasive piety and religious culture in the home. Jewish religion has been born, in all periods, not in the synagogue but in the family center. Puritan faith had its nurture around the family hearth. Quakerism has lived and flourished only where the home was the nursery of its spirit and its ideals."²

D. Factors in the Recent Development of Family Worship

Moving from the past to the present, one realizes that there has been a sharp decline in family worship. This is a recognized fact.³ In recent years there has been an effort on the part of denominations to re-emphasize the importance of religion in the home. The observance of Christian Family Week, the week before Mother's Day in May, and the abundance of materials published by the denominational boards and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America have aided this effort.

When the question is asked, "Why the decline in family worship?" there are many answers. Part of the reason lies in the changes which have taken place in home

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 29.
2. R. M. Jones: Religion and Family Life, in Family Life Today, M. E. Rich, ed., p. 184.
3. Cf. Ziegler: op. cit., p. 9. From E. W. Burgess: The Modern Family, pp. 4, 5.

life. Part is to be found in a changed attitude toward religion.

1. Changes in Home Life

Barclay in the introduction to A Book of Worship states that he feels that neglect of family worship "is due to the changed conditions of modern life more than any other one cause."¹ What are some of the changes which have taken place in home life?

a. Changes resulting from the new industrial order

In former generations the home was the center of industry. The source of income for the family was derived from work done within the circle of the home. This is no longer true in most families. Industry has been transferred from the home to the office or factory.² The father leaves home early in the morning and returns in the late afternoon. Often the mother and sometimes even the children are away from home many hours of the day. This means that the family is separated for most of the day. Modern industry runs in high gear, and especially during the increased production of wartime, there were families where different members worked on all three of the daily shifts. This condition may still exist in some industrial

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1. W. C. Barclay: A Book of Worship, Introduction, p. vii.
2. Cf. L. A. Weigle: The Training of Children in the Christian Family, pp. 18-23.

areas.¹ There is less opportunity for the family to be together. Weigle points out:

"The children of today fail to get the personal contact and association with their parents, especially with the father, that was characteristic of the older industrial family life."²

They also fail to get the education and discipline arising from sharing in the common occupation and responsibilities of family industry.³ This results in a lessening of parental authority.

The centralization of industry has brought with it the massing of population in cities.⁴ This has created many problems for the family. In some areas the most pressing problem is health, because of the lack of light, fresh air, pure milk, wholesome food, and space to run and play.⁵ But this problem is being met by the effort to do away with slum areas in cities and establish modern housing projects. Still another problem the family faces is the difficulty of acquiring a sense of permanency when the family lives in a rented apartment instead of a home owned by the family.⁶ The close quarters of apartment houses make it difficult for the family to achieve any degree of privacy, either as a family or as individuals

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1. Cf. Brown: op. cit., p. 51.
2. Weigle: op. cit., p. 23.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 21.
4. Cf. Ibid., pp. 23-25.
5. Cf. Ibid., p. 24.
6. Cf. Ibid., p. 24.

within the family. Under these conditions the family is apt to lack center and substance.¹ But the greatest problem which life in the city creates for family unity is the tendency of the sights and attractions of the city to pull the family apart to find recreation and amusement.² If the industrial life lessens the time which the family spends together, this factor cuts down their leisure hours together even more. Holt describes this danger in these words:

"Every city contains in its very nature all of the materials for family tragedy. There are so many things to appeal to the different members of the family, that without a conscious effort to develop the right attitudes of mind toward one another, they soon find themselves developing independent groups of friends, developing separate interests, scarcely ever going to places together, until finally they wake up some day to the fact that they are only living together by tolerance, and staying under one roof because of custom or inertia."³

Thus far the changes in home life which have been considered have affected only those homes which depend on industry or related occupations, requiring life in a city. But the new industrial order has affected life on the most isolated farm or in the smallest village because it has made possible greater opportunities than ever before through scientific progress. One may well ask, "Has this created problems? Has it not rather

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 24.
2. Cf. Ibid.
3. Harold Holt: Building Family Foundations, p. 6.

made life easier?" Of course it has made life easier, but nevertheless it has changed home life and presents certain problems.

Consider the automobile. Distance now means almost nothing. Whereas in our parents' childhood a trip to town was an all day matter, today it requires but a few minutes. The automobile has given the modern family greater freedom and increased opportunity for culture, but it also involves more risks. The Haywards picture for us the change in home life:

"The older home could make its impression on the children because there was almost no other place to go, no way to get there, and little to do if one did go. Today, these things are all changed and parents must create homes that influence life by their own inner appeal and worth, and not merely by the necessity of children having to stay at home."¹

The motion pictures have affected life tremendously. They are the most popular leisure-time activity in our country today. They take the family outside the home for passive recreation. And the effect? They have increased knowledge, stirred emotions, and created perplexing attitudes and ideals.² The radio also has stamped its influence on home life. Much is being said today by secular sources concerning the need to lift the

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1. P. R. Hayward and M. H. Hayward: Achieving a Christian Home Today, p. 3.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 4.

standard of radio programs. The radio can be a means of enlarging knowledge of world affairs, enriching appreciation of music and literature, and deepening the spiritual life, but too often it has filled the minds of children, adolescents, and adults with triviality, vulgarity, flippancy, and insincerity.¹

The modern machine in the home has lessened the work which must be done there. This means increased leisure, but it also means a lack of family projects involved in the work, which provided happy fellowship for the family and training in industry, self-control, and patience for the children. Unless the family spends the leisure thus gained in cooperative fun or enterprises, something of family unity is lost.

b. Changes caused by the contemporary philosophy of life

There are forces at work in contemporary life which are indirectly related to religious thinking and yet are not a part of it. These have to do with modern social attitudes based on the contemporary philosophy of life. They have their effect on home life.

One of these attitudes is a spirit of individualism.² It is the "every-man-for-himself" philosophy. There is an unwillingness and inability to surrender

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 4.

2. Cf. Brown: op. cit., p. 50.

personal rights, a surrender which is essential to the harmony and welfare of family life.¹ Such a spirit does not build family unity. It has been aided by the new freedom of women which has produced the wife and mother who is also a career woman.² As Brown says, "Individualism is dominantly selfish."³ And there is no room for selfishness in a Christian home. This attitude has encouraged smaller families, which offer less opportunity for learning cooperation, tolerance, and sharing, and which provide a greater possibility for self-centered attitudes.⁴

Another common social attitude is expressed in the spirit of lawlessness which is evident in life today.⁵ Unwholesome moral influences are at work in our world. The books published and the movies shown on the screen have a tendency to twist and warp our whole conception of love, marriage, and home life.⁶ Standards of ethics are ignored. The home itself has failed in many instances to develop a respect for law and clearly constituted authority. Parental authority is therefore disregarded.⁷

Even in homes which are nominally Christian there often exists a spirit of worldliness, an absorption in

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 50.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 51.
3. Ibid., p. 50.
4. Cf. Hayward and Hayward: *Achieving a Christian Home Today*, p. 5.
5. Cf. Brown: *op. cit.*, p. 52.
6. Cf. Ibid.
7. Cf. Ibid.

activities which, though innocent in themselves, so completely fill the life of the home that there is no room left for the divine and eternal things of God.¹ Materialism is encouraged when the family is over-concerned with the perishable things of this life.

These changes in home life are to a large extent responsible for the decline in family worship. For one thing, the family has difficulty in getting together at any one time long enough to worship. Actually there is less desire to get together. Life is so full of other things that the family does not care to take time for worship. Wood claims that the changes in home life do not need to interfere with the family's worship if they really desire to have it. He says:

"People who think that family worship is impossible in the hurry of the modern world will find that much of their time is spent with things vastly less important. As this generation spends less time on the average, in work, than any preceding generation, it is evident that we can find time for worship as we find time for other things we want to do . . ."²

"The experience of thousands of younger homes proves that family worship is just as practical a possibility in this generation as in the days of our fathers."³

2. Changes in the Attitude Toward Religion

Not all of the cause for the decline in family

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 53.

2. L. F. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, p. 43.

3. Ibid., p. 44.

worship can be traced to changes in home life. Some of the responsibility must be placed on the shoulders of the church itself and the changed attitude toward religion.

a. Religious concepts are in flux

Fiske in a pamphlet on "The Importance of Worship in the Home" makes this statement:

"Sincerity requires us to admit that in many homes the decadence of family worship has not been due to the social problem or schedule difficulties. In some homes it signalizes the waning interest in religion. In many other homes religious interest is still sincere but religious ideas are in flux; ideas about the Bible, God, prayer, and other religious fundamentals have so changed that the fathers honestly do not know what to say about religion to-day."¹

God is no longer regarded as a personal being with an interest in the affairs of human life. The Bible is not recognized as the supreme Revelation of God and the authoritative guide for faith and practice. Prayer is not considered as working any real change in human affairs. The fact that family worship has declined is an indication that the spiritual life of the church has died down. Alexander points out that "it is highly honourable to family-worship . . . that it languishes and goes into decay in times when error and worldliness make inroads upon the church."²

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1. G. W. Fiske: The Importance of Worship in the Home, p. 7.
2. Alexander: op. cit., p. 28.

As a by-product of these changed ideas family worship is no longer supported by public opinion and popular custom. Of course, a thing should be continued not simply because it is a popular custom but because of its own intrinsic worth. Here is a case, however, of a worthwhile custom being neglected because of the prevailing indifference to religion.

b. The church has taken over the parents' responsibility

With the modern movement in religious education, which has brought many fine things, there has come a danger that the church will usurp the parents' place in the religious training of the children. This should not be true. The Sunday School, one hour a week, can never replace the home's full-time opportunity.

Many parents today do not feel competent to lead their family in worship and are willing to regard Sunday morning in church as sufficient. This is due to a number of factors. The parents have not been encouraged by the church to maintain personal Bible study. They themselves do not know where to find suitable portions of Scripture to read or how to lead a discussion concerning them.¹

Parents do not know how to pray. They find it difficult to express themselves in prayer.² It is no

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1. Cf. Fiske: The Importance of Worship in the Home, p. 7.
2. Cf. Barclay: A Book of Worship, Introduction, p. vii.

longer the fashion in many churches for the pastor to call on a member of the congregation to lead in prayer. This responsibility is left to the minister. As a consequence of their lack of knowledge about the Bible and inability to pray, parents are embarrassed when they attempt to lead worship because it seems to be an awkward and abnormal situation.¹

But the reason that many parents do not know their Bibles, cannot pray, and do not know how to worship, is that they do not have a vital faith to express in worship. Therefore they do not feel the need for family worship.² Sweet says, "Parents cannot give to children what they do not have themselves. They cannot radiate a religious faith if they have none."³ Wood put it this way:

"In order to make the home spiritually upbuilding, parents must cultivate personal religion. If their own spiritual cupboard is bare they cannot give nourishment to their children."⁴

It may be that some moral problem, a sin loved and persisted in, is the barrier which makes it impossible for the parents to conduct family worship. As Brown says, "A moral housecleaning may be necessary before a beginning can be made in sincerity and truth."⁵

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1. Cf. L. A. Weigle and H. H. Tweedy: Training the Devotional Life, p. 75.
2. Cf. Ibid.
3. H. J. Sweet: Opening the Door for God, p. 30.
4. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, p. 8.
5. Brown: op. cit., p. 79.

Recently the church has realized anew the need to stress the necessity for worship in the home. But too often it has not assisted the parents in the task of planning and conducting family worship. People who have honestly desired to have family devotions, have not known how to adapt them to modern demands on time and have not been supplied with simple and usable aids.¹ The church must assist the family, through personal counseling and by supplying materials and helps for planning family worship.

E. Summary

As a basis for this study in planning family worship, the nature and development of family worship have been considered. Family worship was defined as "all the members of a family group joining together in an experience of fellowship with God." Its forms may be varied to suit the needs and desires of the family.

The survey of the historical development of family worship revealed that when the church has been most deeply spiritual, there has been an emphasis on family worship. In times of spiritual decline, family worship has also declined. This fact may be both a cause and an effect. In other words, when family worship has been

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1. Cf. Barclay: A Book of Worship, Introduction, p. vii.

emphasized, the church has been deeply spiritual; and when family worship has declined, there has been a corresponding spiritual decline.

The present-day decline in family worship has been attributed to changes which have taken place in the home life and changes in the attitude toward religion. The changes in home life, while creating problems for the family, do not make family worship impossible. The changes in the attitude toward religion make family worship as necessary today as ever. The church must therefore make every effort to assist the family in planning for family worship.

CHAPTER II

THE VALUES AND AIMS OF FAMILY WORSHIP

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A. Introduction

To suggest that worship is worth-while only because of certain objective values derived from it would be to give a false interpretation of its true nature. As Barclay tells us:

"The experience of fellowship with God, to the extent that it has the quality of reality, is . . . an end in itself . . . In and for itself it is one of the highest values of life."¹

"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever."²

There are, however, objective values of family worship which it is well to know, and there are definite aims which need to be kept in mind in planning the family's worship experience. The purpose of this chapter will be to consider these values and aims, realizing that the highest value and true aim is that stated above.

In considering the values of family worship in the present day, it will be necessary first to think of the values of any worship experience, whether private

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1. Barclay: The Church and a Christian Society, p. 203.
2. Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 1.

devotions, the family experience, or the Sunday morning church service. Then the values of family worship in particular will be studied as they are related to the individual, the home, and the church.

When the values of family worship have been studied, it should be possible to determine some of the comprehensive aims which family worship should seek to accomplish. Following a brief consideration of the purpose, selection, and use of aims in planning a worship experience, the aims of family worship will be stated as they relate to the individual and to the home.

This chapter will function as a guide for the following chapter, which will be a consideration of the principles and materials for planning family worship.

B. Values of Family Worship In The Present Day

Hartshorne has very significantly said that "True worship arises out of and satisfies certain universal human needs."¹ If this is true, worship is not only a privilege, but also a necessity. If it can be shown that family worship meets real needs in the life of the family, there will be convincing evidence for the necessity of maintaining it. In the following discussion of the values of family worship, the present-day need for

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1. Hugh Hartshorne: Manual for Training in Worship, p. 1.

these values will be pointed out. In this way, their true value for present-day life can be clearly seen.

Before turning to the particular values of family worship, it will be necessary to consider briefly the values derived from any real worship experience. Following this, the particular values of family worship for the individual, for the home, and for the church will be considered in greater detail.

1. Values of Worship

a. Provides fellowship with God

One of the fundamental needs which worship satisfies, according to Hartshorne, is the need for an ideal companionship.¹ Barclay says, "Men greatly need, and never more than today, a sustaining, inspiring sense of the presence of God."² It is not enough to know about God; we must know God. One of the important tasks of Christian education is to make God real to people, to make Him real in their consciousness, and worship is one of the most effective ways of doing this.³ People who take the time to spend a few moments each day in worship find that throughout the day they are more conscious of God's presence with them.⁴

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 1.
2. Barclay: The Church and a Christian Society, p. 205.
3. Cf. Ibid.
4. Cf. R. E. Magill: Making the Foundations Sure.

b. Releases spiritual energies for Christian living

Another universal human need which Hartshorne lists is the need for moral reinforcement.¹ The perplexing struggles, temptations, opportunities, and responsibilities which each individual faces daily make it necessary to use every means possible to strengthen the individual.² Most people know what is right, but they do not have the will to live up to the right they know. As Barclay says, "They need the dynamic of Christian living."³

Worship meets this need by releasing spiritual energies. Through worship one experiences a sense of union with God by which His strength and power become our own.⁴ In this way poise is cultivated, purpose strengthened, and energy increased.⁵

c. Aids in the solution of problems

Worship challenges an individual to look at life from God's perspective.⁶ When this happens, ideas are clarified, intellectual insight and discernment are quickened, and an individual is able to view problems in a new way.⁷ Often in the actual worship experience a person can

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1. Cf. Hartshorne: op. cit., p. 1.
2. Cf. Wood: Growing Together in the Family, pp. 122, 123.
3. Barclay: The Church and a Christian Society, pp. 207, 208.
4. Cf. M. C. Powell: Guiding the Experience of Worship, p. 18.
5. Cf. Barclay: The Church and a Christian Society, p. 176.
6. Cf. Ibid., p. 206.
7. Cf. Ibid., p. 205.

see clearly the issues involved in a problem, make a decision, and solve the problem. Even when it does not do this, worship helps the worshipper to realize that he is not alone. He can depend on God's help.¹ This brings courage to carry on in the face of any difficulty the day may bring.²

d. Gives meaning and value to life

Because of the sordidness and materialism of every-day life, every individual needs the appreciation of higher values which worship can give. When worship gives expression to the beautiful and true in conduct and character, life is enriched.³ When these higher values of life are constantly held before the individual in worship, life is lifted above the lower planes of absorption with the material affairs of life.

People need to have their lives unified around an integrating center. The supreme center around which life should be unified is the purpose of doing the will of God. Such unification can best be achieved by worship.⁴

2. The Values of Family Worship

The questions may now be asked: "But cannot

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1. Cf. Powell: op. cit., p. 17.
2. Cf. Barclay: The Church and a Christian Society, p. 176.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 206, 207.
4. Cf. Ibid., p. 208; and Powell: op. cit., p. 19.

these values of worship be derived from public worship in the church? Why have family worship?" This question will be considered in its relation to the individual, the home, and the Christian Church.

a. Values of family worship for the individual

- (1) Relates God and worship to daily life and daily problems

When the worship experience of an individual is limited to the public worship of the church, usually that on Sunday, there is a tendency for worship to be thought of as a thing apart from and unrelated to the normal experiences of life. McAfee gives a warning against this danger:

"Religion must not become a foreign, outside fact, something that has to be gone after, say, to Sunday school or to church. It must become part of the family thinking in some wholly normal way, its terms becoming familiar and its point of view habitual."¹

When a family worships together in the home, religion becomes a matter of every-day interest.² It is seen to be genuine, something for every-day life, not just for Sunday.³

Daily worship relates God to daily life and problems. For example, the simple habit of returning thanks

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1. C. B. McAfee: Keeping Alive a Family's Thought of God, p. 2.
2. Cf. Alexander: op. cit., p. 38.
3. Cf. Fiske: The Importance of Worship in the Home, p. 4.

for food helps a child to recognize God as the giver of the food which he eats. In this way he gains a true picture of life.¹

Barclay points out that our formal worship services on Sunday to a large extent are artificial situations. It is difficult to order a specific time and place for worship, for it rises most naturally out of some life situation and activity.² Family worship can be more closely related to life's normal activities and therefore more natural than the Sunday morning worship service.

(2) Trains in the art of worshiping

Children need the daily training and example which family worship provides.³ In a leaflet on family worship one writer says: "What happens in the home, especially while children are young, becomes a normal family procedure and is more important to our religious life all our life long--than anything else."⁴

Not only do children need the daily training of worship, but they also need the simple and informal worship experience in the home environment. There is danger, in the beauty of architecture and elaborate ritual of the church, that worship may become merely an awareness of the awe inspired by beauty. Barclay reminds us that "The

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1. Cf. E. S. Rudisill: Christian Family Life, pp. 15, 16.
2. Cf. Barclay: The Church and a Christian Society, p. 200.
3. Cf. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., p. 73.
4. Let's Worship Together in the Family.

worship of God must be something more than the sensuous enjoyment of form and color and sound."¹ Family worship provides a needed balance. It helps to emphasize the spiritual quality, apart from aesthetic stimulants, which is the heart of true worship.

Family worship provides an opportunity for participation, and Sherrill says: "Participation is one of the most significant ways by which children learn."² It also provides association with parents, another important factor in the learning process.³ Weigle says that we transgress this principle of personal association when we simply teach children to say their prayers and do not have family worship.⁴

Family worship offers opportunities for both children and adults to become familiar with the tools of worship. One of the best ways to learn to pray in public is to lead in prayer in the family circle. Parents as well as children need this training. The family can memorize some of the great prayers of Scripture and church. If these prayers are meaningfully used in the home, they will have increased value when used in public.

Many people have difficulty reading Scripture aloud because they are not familiar with the style of

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1. Barclay: *The Church and a Christian Society*, p. 211.
2. L. J. Sherrill: *Family and Church*, p. 146.
3. Cf. Weigle: *op. cit.*, p. 192.
4. Cf. *Ibid.*

Biblical language. People also need to learn to read Scripture in unison. Family worship provides this experience for both young and old. It also trains individuals to listen understandingly to the reading of Scripture. And of course it makes the content of Scripture familiar to all. Well-known portions which have been memorized or read frequently by the family will have greater value when used in the pulpit.

The hymnology of the Christian Church is a storehouse rich and varied. Children need to know this great treasure. Family worship can help children learn the music and understand the meaning of the hymns if the parents will explain obscure words and phrases. Telling a story related to a hymn will deepen the appreciation of it.

There is little doubt that children accustomed to worship in the home will be able to worship more effectively in the church.

(3) Is a means of Christian education

Not only does family worship train children in the art of worshiping, but it is also a means of Christian education. Barclay says that it is not good psychology to separate worship from instruction. Rather, "Instruction should be interfused with the spirit of worship, and all corporate worship should have in it an element of

instruction."¹ In the atmosphere of worship a child gains much of his religious understanding. There are elements of the Christian religion which are communicated by attitude, demeanor, and atmosphere, rather than by word.²

Wood says that "the most effective way of imparting a religious outlook and attitude to the child is through giving him personal fellowship in worship with those he loves."³ He tells of a recent study which revealed that children who are used to hearing their parents' voices in prayer in the family circle are more easily influenced religiously by their parents.⁴

In his prayers the parent reveals what his ideas of God are and what he believes regarding the nature of prayer.⁵ These ideas and attitudes are unconsciously absorbed by children and greatly influence their own ideas and attitudes.

Besides the familiarity with the Bible which is gained through family worship, children are building up a store of sacred memories which will be theirs for the rest of their lives.⁶ Some such memory may open the way to an important decision in adolescence.⁷

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1. Barclay: The Church and a Christian Society, p. 200.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 203.
3. Wood: Growing Together in the Family, p. 122.
4. Cf. Ibid., p. 123.
5. Cf. Sherrill: op. cit., p. 147.
6. Cf. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, p. 10.
7. Cf. Ibid., p. 12.

In Christian education the parent attempts to train his child in Christian conduct. But many parents fail to give their children the very thing which will motivate Christian living--a realization of God's presence through regular worship.¹ Hartshorne says, "Christian worship is fundamental to Christian character."²

One of the primary objectives of Christian education is to lead growing persons into an experience of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.³ Not only does family worship prepare the way for personal commitment, but it is the most natural place and time for such commitment to be made. Under normal circumstances parents should be the ones to lead their children into this experience.

b. Values of family worship for the home

Not only does family worship have specific values for individuals in the family, but it has values also for the home itself. Brown, in a study course on the Christian home, written for use in the Lutheran Church, says:

"Today, perhaps, as never before, the family, the home, and marriage are being tested; and many of them are not standing up under the test. Our home life is being shaken by much unrest and confusion. An abiding civilization cannot be built upon the foundation of shattered homes. Our homes need the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit brings that Presence into every home where family

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1. Cf. Elizabeth McE. Shields: First Steps in Family Worship, p. 3.
2. Hartshorne: op. cit., p. 2.
3. Cf. Principles and Objectives of Christian Education, International Curriculum Guide, Book One, p. 11.

worship is faithfully practiced. God hears the prayers of his people from the home altar as willingly as those from the cathedral altar."¹

(1) Unifies the family

Studies which have been made reveal that there are fewer divorces among homes where a real spiritual life is cultivated and where religious duties are taken seriously.² Why is this true? Because, as Kardatzke and Phillips point out, family worship "cements the family together in a spiritual unity that transcends all purely human relationships."³ As was stated previously, modern life presents many attractions to pull the family apart.⁴ Work, pleasure, the public school with its round of extracurricular activities, and even the church itself, which in its program too often disregards family unity, all conspire to keep members of the family apart rather than to bind them together.⁵ The family needs to share experiences in as many areas of life as possible in order to build family unity.⁶ Worship is an area which should not be neglected. One of its practical effects is to resist the centrifugal force of diverse interests.⁷

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1. Brown: op. cit., p. 78.
2. Cf. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, p. 8.
3. C. Kardatzke and H. Phillips: Ways of Worshipping in Our Home, p. 2.
4. Ante, p. 12.
5. Cf. Sherrill: op. cit., pp. 44, 45.
6. Cf. Ibid., p. 44.
7. Cf. Fiske: The Importance of Worship in the Home, p. 4.

(2) Symbolizes the sacredness of the home

Because of the present-day attitude toward moral standards, the family needs to be constantly reminded that the home was established by God. "God setteth the solitary in families."¹ Family worship is a symbol of the sacredness of the family institution.²

(3) Prepares the family for emergencies

The family which worships together regularly is prepared when emergencies come.³ Death, sickness, loss of income, may overwhelm the family, but they know where to turn for spiritual resources to meet the situation. Christian family consciousness, which family worship gives, assures them that God's Word is able to bind them together, come what may.⁴

(4) Makes the home a more pleasant place in which to live

In the complex society in which we live, there are many causes for friction in human relationships. This can be especially true in the home. Even the natural love which members of the family have for one another cannot always endure the strain which modern problems place on the

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1. Psalm 68:6.

2. Cf. Fiske: The Importance of Worship in the Home, p. 4.

3. Ibid.

4. Cf. Brown: op. cit., p. 82.

family.¹ But family worship is a resource, available to every Christian family, which is of infinite value in achieving Christian family life.² It will make family intercourse purer and sweeter, help to curb tempers, and encourage unselfishness.³ It will help each member to cultivate the Christian graces of reverence, humility, and gratitude.⁴ C. A. Wendell, in a little book prepared especially for newly married couples, says:

"Daily devotion makes the home a haven of peace, a shelter from storm and conflict, a trysting place with God, a source of moral and spiritual health, and a wellspring of personal and national nobility."⁵

c. Values of family worship for the Church

The church was never intended to replace the home. Home and church must work hand in hand in the task of Christian education and evangelism. The church must help the home, and just as truly the home must help the church. Although the values which family worship contributes to the church are by no means the most important, they are highly significant.

(1) Aids in producing a strong and vital church life

"The world is constantly expressing disgust at the laziness and selfishness of church members,

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1. Cf. Kardatzke and Phillips: op. cit., p. 2.
2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 1, 2.
3. Cf. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., p. 73.
4. Cf. Kardatzke and Phillips: op. cit., p. 3.
5. C. A. Wendell: Getting Married, pp. 49, 50.

and it is often assumed that all their moral delinquencies are due to the incompetency or unfaithfulness of the ordained officials of religion. It is in the unkempt and worldly life of the home, that we are to find the explanations of most of the sins and failures of the Christian church."¹

There is little doubt that this charge brought against church members is largely true, and Jefferson's explanation of it is very revealing. Wood says that "other institutions and forms of religious experience help, but the home is the place in which the essential values of religion are mainly developed."²

Family worship ties the family to the church in a very real way.³ Tweedy says that if we "take worship out of all homes . . . we shall have a constantly diminishing church attendance . . ."⁴

(2) Aids in producing leaders in the church

Sherrard beautifully expressed one value of family worship when he said, "Out of homes that have been brought into daily conscious fellowship with God come lives offered up as a sacrifice well-pleasing unto God."⁵ Christian family worship must be maintained if we expect to have an adequate group of spiritual leaders--ministers,

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1. Jefferson: op. cit., p. 18.
2. Wood: Growing Together in the Family, p. 120.
3. Cf. Brown: op. cit., p. 81.
4. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., p. 74.
5. R. C. Sherrard: The Church in Thy House, p. 12.

missionaries and lay workers.¹ It is a fact today that the number of men entering the ministry is far below the number who are retiring or dying. Mission boards are asking for more missionaries than there are volunteers. Undoubtedly one reason for this lack of recruits to Christian service is the decline in family worship in our Christian homes.

(3) Prepares the way for public worship

As was discussed in connection with its value for the individual, family worship trains in the art of worshipping.² This makes possible a more effective worship service on Sunday. According to Barclay, worship is "central and basic in the Christian religion."³ Worship was the most prominent single feature of Judaism, the religion which was the soil from which Christianity sprang; and even though the early Christian church discarded the elaborate paraphernalia of Jewish worship--temple, sacrifices, and offerings--worship remained as the heart of Christianity.⁴ Yet many professing Christians do not know how to worship. For them, attending church is merely that-- "attending" as spectators to listen to a paid choir and the minister. Worship is unnatural and difficult to them

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1. Cf. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., p. 74.

2. Ante, pp. 29-31.

3. Barclay: The Church and a Christian Society, p. 197.

4. Ibid.

because it has been limited to the church and Sunday school.¹ People who are accustomed to worshipping daily in the home will not have this difficulty. The family which has learned to know and love the Word of God in family worship in the home will receive it gladly in church.²

C. The Aims of Family Worship

1. The Necessity and Purpose of Aims

In the previous section of this chapter it has been seen that family worship has certain values in the life of the individual, in the home, and for the church. Yet in actual experience these values are often lost. Family worship fails to produce vital results in many instances. This may be one reason its practice has declined.

Part of the cause for the failure to produce results is a lack of definite aims in planning family worship experiences. It is necessary, therefore, to turn now to a consideration of the aims for family worship.

a. The value of aims

After recognizing that family worship can and should have real values, the family needs to keep definite

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1. Cf. Weigle and Tweedy: *op. cit.*, p. 73.
2. Cf. Brown: *op. cit.*, p. 81.

aims, or objectives, in mind in planning their worship experiences. Such aims will indicate the direction which the worship experience should take, will determine the type of experience planned, and will guide in the choice of materials and methods to be used; they will also afford a basis upon which the results of the worship experience can be evaluated and improvements made.¹

There is no reason why worship should not be more interesting and constructive today than ever before.² An understanding of the aims of family worship and a wise use of them will keep worship from becoming stereotyped and purposeless. Instead, family worship will be a progressive, growing experience, suited to the needs and level of development of individuals, and flexible in its program.³

b. The selection of aims

In determining aims two types must be recognized.⁴ Comprehensive aims are general statements of the results to be achieved by family worship. They do not change over the years and are more or less the same for all Christian families. Later in this chapter these comprehensive aims will be stated.

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1. Cf. International Curriculum Guide, Book One, Principles and Objectives of Christian Education, p. 9.
2. Cf. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, p. 44.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 46.
4. Cf. International Curriculum Guide, op. cit., p. 9.

On the other hand, there also need to be specific aims. These may be the desired outcomes of worship which are the steps in realizing the more comprehensive objectives, or they may be specific applications of the comprehensive objectives.¹ The nature of specific aims will vary from one family to another and from time to time, depending upon the peculiar circumstances of each family. They, therefore, cannot be set up once for all but will be constantly changing.

Aims must be based on needs. It will be seen that each of the comprehensive aims presented is based on a need, which family worship can and should meet. Likewise the specific aims must be based on specific needs which arise in the life of the family from time to time. The family must be constantly alert to these special needs and plan its worship accordingly.²

In setting up the comprehensive aims of family worship in the following pages, reference will be made to the values of family worship already discussed. It will be seen that although the aims are related to the values, not all of the values are to be thought of as aims to be kept in mind in planning worship. Some of the values are a by-product of family worship. This is true with reference to

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 9.

2. Cf. Powell: op. cit., p. 91.

the values for the church. The primary purpose of family worship is to minister to individuals in the family and to the family as a group. Its value for the church is derived from the strengthening of individual Christian personalities.¹

When specific aims are set up by the family, they should be clearly stated, perhaps even written down.² This makes it possible to refer to them later. If the family has a family planning council, as some families do, this would be the time to formulate specific aims. Each member then would be aware of the aims and could seek to achieve them through worship. Or the formulation of aims might be a part of an actual worship experience:

c. The use of aims in planning family worship

Once aims have been set up, they must be used in order to have value. They need to be used by both the leader and the participants. For the leader of worship they determine the theme and content of the worship experience. For the participants they give a purpose, or driving force, to motivate worship.³ Worship that is not purposeful lacks an element essential for effective worship.

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1. Cf. Christian Family Life Education, Bulletin No. 425, pp. 13, 14.
2. Cf. Powell: op. cit., p. 91.
3. Cf. International Curriculum Guide, op. cit., p. 9.

As was pointed out, aims may be used as a basis for evaluating the results of the worship experience. The parents, or perhaps the whole family, need to ask themselves from time to time such questions as these: What specific evidences in our family life reveal that these aims are or are not being achieved? If they are not, what may be the reason? Are all or only part of the aims met by our worship? What changes need to be made in the form, content, or atmosphere of our worship in order to achieve these aims more effectively? An honest consideration of such questions will make the family aware of changes in family life which necessitate changes in family worship. Frequent evaluation will help to keep the worship experience a vital, growing experience in the life of each member of the family.

2. Statement of the Aims for Family Worship

The following statement of the comprehensive aims for family worship has been worked out on the basis of the universal needs of Christian families and in the light of the values which can and should be derived from family worship.¹ These aims are grouped according to their relation to the individual in the family and to the family as a unit.

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1. Ante, pp. 24-39.

a. Aims in relation to the individual

- (1) To provide for each individual a growing experience of personal fellowship with God in an atmosphere of daily living and with the group of people with whom he shares many daily experiences

If only one primary aim of worship could be stated, it would be to provide a growing experience of personal fellowship with God. If worship fails to provide this experience, it has failed, for this experience is the very heart of worship. As Weigle points out, "Worship seeks acquaintance with God, not merely knowledge about God."¹

The effect on the religious outlook and attitude of children resulting from fellowship in worship with loved ones has been mentioned.² Wood says that "there is no group in which unity and love are more characteristic than the family; and unity, love and adoration are the atmosphere of worship."³ He cites the story of Jesus in the home of Martha and Mary⁴ to indicate that the home should provide a setting for spiritual fellowship.⁵ From these statements we see the necessity for keeping life in the

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1. Weigle: op. cit., p. 7.
2. Ante, p. 32.
3. Wood: Growing Together in the Family, p. 121.
4. Luke 10:38-42.
5. Cf. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, p. 43.

home on a level which provides an atmosphere conducive to a real experience of fellowship with God.

The purpose of relating the experience of fellowship with God to daily life should be kept foremost in planning family worship.¹ Worship should come out of life and enter into life. A teen-age girl said: "If you want family worship to mean what it should to the children who take part in it you've got to tie it up to the things they are doing every day."²

An experience of real fellowship with God which is related to daily life and which is shared with those dearest will transform ideas, attitudes, and actions.

- (2) To focus the teachings of God's Word on daily life and to find guidance for specific problems

The primary purpose for the use of the Bible in family worship is not for instruction, although an increased knowledge of Biblical material will certainly result.³ Instead, the real purpose is to deepen an appreciation and love of the Bible as God's revelation of Himself and His will. This revelation needs to be focused on daily life and individual problems so that those who

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1. Cf. Ante, pp. 28, 29.
2. H. J. Sheridan and A. S. Sheridan: Christian Family Worship, p. 18.
3. Cf. M. W. Askew: Your Home Today and Tomorrow, p. 61.

worship come to regard the Bible as a real guidebook for daily living.¹ Barclay says:

"In reading the Bible we are lifted above the limitations and restrictions by which we are hedged about and become sharers in that larger experience which is in a unique way the spiritual heritage of the race."²

Sherrill points out that the Bible may actually reach children through the thinking and living of their parents long before they are able to understand the actual language of Scripture.³

One parent expressed his aim regarding the use of the Bible in family worship in these words: "The ideal always in mind has been that something from Scripture must get into the family consciousness daily . . ."⁴

(3) To release daily in each individual's life the power which comes through united prayer

Both Weigle and Barclay, as well as others, point out that prayer is the central act in worship.⁵ Among the many promises which our Lord gave regarding prayer the following one stands out particularly in regard to family prayer:

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1. Cf. Sheridan and Sheridan: op. cit., p. 22.
2. Barclay: The Church and a Christian Society, p. 202.
3. Quoted by Sweet: op. cit., p. 65.
4. How One Family Handled Family Prayers, p. 3.
5. Weigle: op. cit., p. 194; and Barclay: The Church and a Christian Society, p. 201.

"Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."¹

Here is a promise which can be claimed by even the smallest family group. It is through prayer that the power of God is released to flow through individual lives. As was pointed out previously, this power is needed today as much as ever before.² Although there are many desirable values of family prayer,³ the primary aim of prayer in family worship is to make it possible for God to work in and through the lives of each member of the family in answer to the prayer which has been voiced.

It should be remembered that prayer includes many aspects: not only petition and intercession, but also adoration, confession, thanksgiving and submission.⁴ Robinson points out that although first one and then another of these elements will predominate and give the tone to the family's prayers, every element ought to find its place and add its part to family worship.⁵

(4) To reinforce the work of the church

The value of family worship as a means of

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1. Matthew 18:19, 20, R.S.V.
2. Ante, p. 26.
3. Cf. Wood: Growing Together in the Family, pp. 121, 122.
4. Cf. H. McA. Robinson: How To Conduct Family Worship, pp. 33-36.
5. Cf. Ibid., p. 33.

Christian education has already been discussed.¹ Authorities recognize that "the task of Christian education . . . is one in which church and family share."² Many assert that the "Primary responsibility for Christian education properly rests upon the home rather than upon the church."³ Even if the home is not prepared to accept this primary responsibility for Christian education, it should not seek to unload all of the responsibility on the church. There is no denying the truth of this statement:

"The development of Christian persons, and the achievement of Christian community life depend far more upon what happens in homes than what happens in churches."⁴

With this in mind, family worship should aim to reinforce, as well as supplement, the work of the church. To do this it must be aware of what is being done in the church. The truths of the Sunday school lesson may be discussed in family worship and practical applications made to the daily life of the family. Prayers, songs, stories, and Bible verses learned in Sunday school may be used to enrich family worship.⁵ An interesting discussion in the Sunday evening young people's meeting may be continued in the family. Decisions or resolutions made in the light of the discussion could be reaffirmed in family

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1. Ante, pp. 31-33.
2. Christian Family Life Education, Bulletin No. 425, p. 15.
3. Ibid., p. 30.
4. Ibid., p. 14.
5. Cf. Sweet: op. cit., p. 102.

worship. The minister's sermon on Sunday could be profitably used as a basis for worship during the following week, by rereading the Scripture lesson, reviewing his points, adding others, and making fresh applications of principles in the light of daily life. Praying together in family worship for the minister, the Sunday school teachers, and the program of the church places a responsibility on the family to heartily cooperate in the work of the church.

b. Aims in relation to the home

The aims of family worship in relation to the home are very closely interrelated. It would be almost impossible to accomplish one without in some measure providing for others. Yet each aim as stated has a particular contribution to family life and is therefore necessary.

- (1) To foster in each individual an awareness of the presence of God in the home

In an article concerning Christian ideals in the home, Vieth points out that the greatest failure of the American family is that it has been neutral on the matter of God and religion.¹ He further says, "The most important contribution which the family makes to Christian ideals is its recognition of God as the head of the house."²

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1. Paul H. Vieth: Christian Ideals in the Home, in The Christian Home, Volume V, No. 2, pp. 2-4.
2. Ibid., p. 2.

This recognition comes by "living in an atmosphere where the presence of God is a basic assumption."¹ Note particularly the words "basic assumption." The verse

"Christ is the Head of this house,
The unseen Guest at every meal,
The silent Listener to every conversation"

needs to be not only a motto on the wall, but also a part of the consciousness of every member of the family. Such a consciousness must necessarily influence the daily life of the home. It will make a difference in the conversation of the family, their attitude toward money and other possessions, their recreational pastimes--books, music, games. The thought of God's presence will not place burdensome restrictions on the Christian family; rather, it will elevate their home life.

But a consciousness of God's presence cannot be stimulated without open recognition of the fact of His presence. Fiske says: "Home religion needs to be outspoken and frank to have a strong influence on the children."² Family worship should make the promotion of an awareness of God's presence one of its foremost aims.

Wieman pictures the concept of the presence of God in the home as the "marriage triangle."³ She asserts the need for

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1. Ibid., p. 2.
2. Fiske: The Christian Family, p. 71.
3. Cf. Regina W. Wieman: The Family Lives Its Religion, pp. 71-82.

a worshipful realization of this presence in order to promote the richest experience between husband and wife.¹

As the family in worship openly confesses God's presence in prayer, seeks His guidance in family decisions, and surrenders life to His control, so in their daily thoughts, words, and deeds they will seek to please Him.

(2) To provide an expression of the unity of the family in the Christian faith

Even though there are many disruptive influences affecting modern family life, the family still has a great deal in common. They share a common heredity, common relatives, a common name, a common economic lot; there are emotional bonds which bind them together; and there are at least some experiences which they have in common.² But many homes are divided on matters of religion. The parents do not belong to the same denomination. This makes for a disunity in the family which may be harmful. Even if the family worships at the same church on Sunday, they may be separated into different groups. And even when they are united in their Sunday worship, there is added value in an experience in the home which expresses the thought, "We are one in Christ."

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 73.

2. Cf. Christian Family Life Education, Bulletin No. 425, p. 15.

The value of family worship in unifying the family was discussed previously.¹ But that is not the primary aim intended here, although it is a by-product of this aim. There needs to be the assurance, in the heart of individual members that there are no barriers between members of the family in spiritual things. Family worship is the highest means of giving expression to this unity.

Taking this as an aim, family worship must be in terms which adequately express the entire group's experience. It will be necessary for the older members to be as child-like in their faith as the youngest of the group. No one in the group should have the feeling of being left out. The more mature Christians must share with the others their own experience. This aim will also make it necessary to provide in some way for participation by the entire group in the worship.

- (3) To make possible happy and harmonious relationships in the daily life of the home

When the presence of God is recognized in the home and when the family is aware of its unity in Christ, there ought to be happy and harmonious relationships between members of the family. A last century writer on family life said:

"The spirit of Christ alone will enable us to live together in perfect peace and love. The presence

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1. Ante, p. 34.

of Christ in a home is a perpetual benediction. We cannot be selfish, we cannot wrangle and strive, we cannot be bitter and unkind, we cannot be irritable and unreasonable, when conscious of the presence of Christ. If only we can keep ourselves aware of his being with us, our household life cannot but grow wondrously sweet."¹

It will be readily seen how closely related this aim is to the two immediately preceding. However, there are homes, even Christian homes, which are characterized by quarreling, misunderstanding, harsh words, and other unchristian practices. Happy and harmonious relationships between members of the family, in working together, playing together, sharing with one another, respecting one another's personal privileges, taking responsibility, and the many other daily give and takes of family life, ought to be an expected result of family worship.

It may be necessary at times to plan a series of family worship experiences similar to those in the Pages of Power Bulletin for 1947.² The theme of this series is "Christian Living Begins at Home." There are devotions on such topics as loving one another, understanding each other, learning to work together, sharing joy together, teaching one another, learning to sacrifice for others. A similar idea is found in a set of plans for one month in The Christian Home, entitled "Growing Up In A Christian Home."³

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1. J. R. Miller: Secrets of Happy Home Life, p. 27.
2. E. K. Battle: Pages of Power No. 3, for 1947.
3. R. C. Lantz: Growing Up In A Christian Home, in The Christian Home, Vol. V, No. 4, pp. 43-48.

But with this aim always in mind, the family should in its worship day by day be increasing in love for one another and finding resources for putting into practice the Christian virtues they know to be right.

- (4) To enrich experiences or occasions of special significance for the family by sharing a spiritual experience based on them

There come into the life of every family special experiences or occasions of lifelong significance which need to be given a spiritual meaning. They may bring joy or sorrow, but the family needs to recognize God's place in them. Birth, marriage, sickness, death, all have spiritual significance. Family decisions which must be made, such as buying a home, moving to a new city, changing jobs, choosing a college, should all be taken to God in prayer with confidence in His guidance. Special days can be made more meaningful through family worship--holidays and holy days, birthdays and anniversaries. Many families build up a store of traditions connected with these days which add to their significance. Family worship should aim to use such opportunities as these for enriching the spiritual heritage of the family.

D. Summary

In considering the values and aims of family worship in this chapter, the thought that "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever" has been kept in mind as both the highest value and the foremost aim of family worship.

Besides this more objective value of family worship, it was pointed out that every true worship experience provides fellowship with God, releases spiritual energies, aids in the solution of problems, and gives meaning and value to life.

For the individual, the family worship experience relates God and worship to daily life and problems, gives training in the art of worshiping, and is a means of Christian education. For the home, it unifies the family, symbolizes the sacredness of the home, prepares the family for emergencies, and makes the home a more pleasant place in which to live. For the church, family worship aids in promoting a strong and vital church life, contributes toward the production of church leaders, and prepares the way for public worship.

Aims are essential in planning a vital worship experience. They determine the direction the experience will take and the type of experience to be planned; they guide in the choice of materials and methods to be used;

and they afford a basis for evaluating the outcome of the experience. There need to be both comprehensive and specific aims for family worship, based on the needs of the family. Each family must determine its own specific aims according to particular circumstances and needs.

The comprehensive aims of family worship will be more or less the same for all families. Those related to the individual are to provide a growing experience of personal fellowship with God in an atmosphere of daily life and with the group of people with whom he is most closely related, to focus God's Word on daily life and problems, to release the power which comes through united prayer, and to reinforce the work of the church school. In relation to the home, family worship should foster in each individual an awareness of the presence of God in the home, should express the family's oneness in their Christian faith, should encourage a happy and harmonious fellowship in the daily life of the home, and should enrich experiences or occasions of special significance for the family by relating them to God through worship.

There are infinite possibilities in family worship for helping to make Christian family life what it can and should be if the family will realize the possibilities and aim toward that goal.

CHAPTER III
PRINCIPLES AND MATERIALS
FOR PLANNING FAMILY WORSHIP

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A. Introduction

No two families are ever exactly alike. A procedure which is successful for one family may not work at all for another. For this reason it is wise not to be too dogmatic about principles for planning family worship or rules for the use of materials. As Kardatzke and Phillips say:

"Undoubtedly, there is no set of materials nor any particular way of conducting worship which is superior to all others. The best homes vary their worship experiences from time to time. Much depends on the individuality of the members of the home and on their efforts to keep home worship from becoming a mere form."¹

In stating aims in the previous chapter the basic needs common to all families were used as a means of determining the comprehensive aims for all family worship. This same method will be used in setting up the principles in this chapter: i.e., to seek those basic principles which apply to all family worship.

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1. Kardatzke and Phillips: op. cit., p. 5.

The discussion of materials for family worship will be in the nature of suggestions rather than rules. It is hoped that every Christian family could find at least some of these suggestions fruitful for their own worship.

However, before dealing with the principles and materials for family worship, it is necessary to consider certain psychological elements often found in family fellowship which influence the conduct of family worship. These elements will not be present in every family situation, but they are found often enough to warrant consideration. Some of them are important factors in determining the principles to be observed, the materials selected, and the use of these materials in family worship.

B. The Psychological Elements in Family Fellowship

1. The Ages of Members of a Family Usually Include a Wide Span

In a family with children there is almost sure to be a wide span of age levels. In a home where there are grandparents, this is lengthened to three generations instead of two. The psychological implications in such a situation must be reckoned with in planning worship. Shields says that one reason for the absence of true worship in the home is that "many of the children in our homes only know the family altar as the place where 'Father

talks to God about the things that he and Mother like to talk about."¹ Not only do interests differ where there is a wide span of age levels, but capacities and needs also vary widely.

There is divergence of opinion on whether or not young children should attend family worship. Wieman feels that in most cases it is better that they do not attend until they have a fair understanding of what God is and how He works in the world.² On the other hand, many authorities emphasize the importance of the atmosphere of worship in shaping a child's future attitude toward worship. The Sheridans tell the story of two young parents who began to kneel and pray aloud by the side of their baby's bed when he was only a few weeks old. Of course, he did not notice them at first, but as he grew older he became accustomed to this procedure as a part of the evening routine. This prepared the way for his later experiences in prayer.³ It is a general conclusion that although a child may not understand the meaning of worship, he profits from the group experience; he becomes aware of the spiritual atmosphere around him and feels himself to be a part of the family group.⁴ In an article for The Christian Home

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1. Shields: op. cit., p. 3.
2. Cf. Wieman: op. cit., p. 216.
3. Cf. Sheridan and Sheridan: op. cit., p. 13.
4. Cf. Rosemary Roorbach; Worship with Young Children, in The Christian Home, Vol. V, No. 4, p. 14.

Rosemary Roorbach gives excellent suggestions for helping young children worship.¹

In his book *Building Spiritual Foundations*, Wood suggests various ways of adapting worship to the expanding family.² With reference to this problem he says:

"Family worship should be a progressive experience, graded to the successive developments, showing flexibility in its worship program, from honeymoon days on through the days when the first babies come and the children grow up into high school and college young people, and into old age."³

But in a family with a combination of adults, adolescents, older children, and nursery children, careful attention must be given in order to plan worship which will hold the interest of the youngest, meet the needs of the adolescents, and not overlook the ones in between. Something of value to all must be discovered and used.

2. The Family May Have A Non-Cooperating Member

Many families fall far short of the ideal which Christian leaders would like to find in the homes of their constituency. There are many homes in which only one of the parents is a Christian. This Christian may have an earnest desire to maintain family worship. If the unsaved parent will willingly attend worship, for the sake of

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1. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-16.
2. Cf. Wood: *Building Spiritual Foundations*, pp. 46-50.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

family unity, that is well and good. Perhaps he or she can be appealed to on the basis of the ethical values of worship for the children. In such a situation it will certainly fall to the Christian parent to assume full responsibility for planning and leading the worship.

But perhaps the unsaved parent refuses to attend family worship. What then? Certainly no one should be forced to attend worship against his will. Although many of the values of family worship will be lost in such a situation, and the children may follow the example of the unsaved parent in not attending, the Christian should seek to provide a vital worship experience for as many in the family as will willingly participate. Here there will be a real need for family prayer in praying for the unsaved members of the family.

Sometimes an unsaved parent may actively oppose family worship, actually seeking to prevent it. In such cases, great wisdom must be used not to do that which will cause a complete disruption of family unity. But even though it may be unwise to maintain regular family worship, the Christians should by all means have their own personal devotions and pray together whenever possible.

Often non-cooperation is not a result of antagonism, but of indifference. Even though both of the parents may be professing Christians, one of them may not appreciate the value of family worship; or because of past experiences,

he or she may not care to participate. In such cases the responsibility again falls on the shoulders of the interested parent to plan and conduct the worship, securing as much cooperation as possible under the circumstances. Everything possible should be done to make the worship vitally interesting and satisfying in order to offset the indifference of the other.

In some homes neither of the parents has enough interest to conduct family worship, and the young people themselves have assumed the leadership.

There are likely to come times in the life of any growing child when he dislikes family worship and desires to be absent from it. This may be merely a part of the growing-up process, whereby he exerts his personal independence. Or it may be the signal for the leaders of worship to evaluate carefully the worship experiences to discover if they are failing to meet the child's needs and interests. It may be necessary to make changes in the form, content, or even the leadership of worship, to add something new or remove something no longer necessary. Parents should be sensitive to the responses their children make to worship and recognize the need for adjustment before open revolt is declared.

In an interesting pamphlet, *How One Family Handled Family Prayers*, the father of a family tells some of their struggles in maintaining the interest of three growing

girls in family worship.

"If anyone says that children can be made to love family worship all the way through, these parents smile at each other, for they do not believe it. They recall their own childhood and their own children, and they know that at certain points in life prayers is an unmitigated bore, one further evidence of the antedated spirit of their parents."¹

He goes on to tell how they experimented with various hours to find the best one for family worship and how it was necessary to vary the program from time to time.

"It has been neither easy nor simple to keep the custom alive. Only a mother's ingenuity has saved the day over and over. An old custom was wearing on the nerves of the young people and the hardened sire did not realize it, but he was gently led to abandon it for something more vital to the new stage. This new custom had to give way to another. But the end has justified the effort."²

If it is considered wisest to permit some member of the family to absent himself from family worship for a period of time, probably the best procedure is to do this as peaceably as possible, without making an issue of it. At the same time the devotions should be kept as interesting and stimulating as possible and the family fellowship as closely knit as ever, so that the absent member senses that he is missing something precious and important to the family.

Non-cooperation is a factor which should be carefully and prayerfully considered by the leader of wor-

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1. How One Family Handled Family Prayers, p. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 4.

worship to discover if possible the reason for it and what can be done to overcome it.

3. The Family May Find It Difficult To Be Together

The problem of time for family worship is perhaps one of the most difficult to solve. The excuse usually given for not having family worship is "We haven't time."

Wood points out that actually this generation spends less time in work, on the average, than any preceding generation. Since this is true, it should be possible for a family to find time for worship, just as they find time for the other things they want to do.¹ In discussing this problem, Robinson says that time can be found for worship if it is desired. It is really a question of whether or not the family has a will to worship God.²

The best time and place for family worship depends entirely upon the family convenience. It would be impossible to say that one set time is better than another.³ However, many families have found that one of the easiest times to get the family together is immediately following a meal. In most families this would be either breakfast or evening dinner.⁴ Others might prefer the

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1. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, p. 43.
2. Robinson: How To Conduct Family Worship, p. 14.
3. Cf. Ibid.
4. Cf. Ziegler: op. cit., p. 17.

bedtime hour. The matter of the place for family worship is also arbitrary. If worship follows a meal, it may be conducted while the family is still seated at the table. If music is used, it may be necessary to move nearer the piano, although a hymn may be sung at the table without accompaniment. An open fire is an inviting place for family worship, especially in winter and if the bed-time hour is the time for worship. For special occasions it might be nice to move out of doors. The place for family worship should be a cheerful, pleasant place where everyone can relax. Regularity in time and place are more important than one particular spot or hour. Family worship should become an accepted part of the schedule, so that all know when and where to expect it.

Many ingenious ways of fitting family worship into special situations have been devised by families. One family which cannot eat breakfast together because of varying schedules has a "breakfast club."¹ A portion of Scripture and a theme hymn for the day are selected and as each individual comes to breakfast he worships alone. A book of devotional meditations is left open for any who have time to read. By this arrangement there is unity in that each person uses the same materials for worship, and yet some of the values of united worship are lost. This

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1. Building A Christian Home, p. 31.

plan would, however, be better than nothing at all.

Another family has a "family night" which they keep clear of distractions. There is something special for supper, then a period of fun, closing with devotions to which each contributes.¹ Whenever possible, however, the family should set aside a regular time each day for worship.

The length of the worship period will depend upon the family. Mrs. Askew warns that "too prolonged periods will subtract from that delight in family worship which should be its very core, especially for the younger members."²

Whatever the length, or whenever the time chosen, family worship should not be rushed. There should be a feeling of calmness and relaxation. The value of worship will be lost almost completely if it is conducted in a "hurry-it-must-be-done" atmosphere.³ The time devoted to worship may have to be so brief that the materials used are quite limited, yet this is better than crowding too much into too brief a time.

It is the testimony of families that the effort necessary to keep a period free for family worship is well repaid.⁴

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1. Cf. Sweet: op. cit., pp. 104, 105.
2. Askew: op. cit., p. 59.
3. Cf. F. D. Heron: Pages of Power for 1946, p. 21.
4. Cf. How One Family Handled Family Prayers.

4. Members of the Family Know Each Other Intimately

There is an old saying, adapted to fit home life: "Parents may fool some of the world all the time, and all the world some of the time, but they will not fool their children any of the time."¹

Children are the first to sense any sham or pretense in their parents' spiritual experience. The truth of this is important in family worship. Parents cannot profess one thing in worship and live another in daily life. As Jefferson says:

"Family prayers are beneficial provided they are offered in an atmosphere which is kept clean and sweet by the daily practice of the Christian virtues. Christianity never seems so revolting as when its ceremonies are stuck into a life which is habitually pagan."²

The quality of Christian living in the home must be genuine in order to create a spiritual atmosphere. Wood says:

"A spiritual atmosphere is the product of Christlike living on the part of parents and in due time of the younger members in the family. It requires a life of fellowship with the Master who can impart power for vital spiritual living in the home and community."³

If parents expect to impart their faith to their children, they must live as if they believed in God and as if this belief made a difference to them.

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1. Hayward and Hayward: Achieving a Christian Home Today, p. 37.
2. Jefferson: op. cit., p. 43.
3. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, p. 9.

Another problem raised by the intimate association of the family is that worship may become self-centered. They may not pray as the old farmer:

"Lord, bless me and my wife,
My son John and his wife,
Us four and no more,"

but they may by the spirit of their prayers give the same effect.¹ Family worship should be concerned vitally with the needs of those in the family, but it must also reach beyond the limits of the family, to include ultimately the whole world.

5. The Family Often Has Guests

A family would be selfish indeed if it were not willing to share its worship with friends and guests. However, a problem may arise when guests unexpectedly drop in, perhaps just as the family is finishing a meal and preparing to worship. If the guests are Christians, they will probably join gladly in the worship. If they are not Christians, the experience of a family worshipping together can be one of the most effective testimonies which could be given.² An invitation to join the worship should be courteously and naturally given and the worship conducted in the normal way. When guests have been invited to a

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1. Cf. Edward D. Staples: Growing Up In A Christian Home, Study course for parents, in The Christian Home, pp. 41, 42.
2. Cf. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, p. 45.

meal or for overnight, it would be expected that they join the family in worship. Close friends of the family will soon learn that family worship is a part of the routine of the home and will plan their visits accordingly.

Friends of the children are often profoundly impressed by family worship, especially if they are not accustomed to it at home. This effect depends, of course, upon the reality and meaningfulness of the worship experience. Although the sons and daughters of the family may, as one father expressed it, be "ashamed to bring . . . friends home overnight because in the morning this awkward and unheard-of practice of reading the Bible and maybe having to say a verse yourself and getting down on your knees has to be gone through,"¹ the visitors often react very differently. One small boy, returning from such a visit said, "They have family worship over there, why can't we have it, too?"²

Guests in the home need not become a barrier, if family worship is approached in a natural and friendly spirit.

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1. How One Family Handled Family Prayers, p. 1.
2. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, p. 45.

C. Principles To Be Observed
in Planning Family Worship

1. Family Worship Should Be Adapted to the Varying Age
Levels in the Group

In the previous discussion of the psychological elements in family fellowship, the problem which arises from a wide span of age levels in the family was discussed.¹ The principle of grading worship to fit the needs and capacities of the group is fundamental in planning worship. Robinson says that "Christian worship is peculiarly capable of this adaptation."² If this is true, there should be little difficulty in observing this principle.

There are several things to remember in planning family worship when young children are present. First of all, the service should be brief. Robinson gives ten minutes as the maximum time for young children.³ This can be used as a gauge, the parents watching carefully to detect signs of restlessness on the part of the children, which indicate that the period is too long.

The language used in family worship should be, as far as possible, also the language to which the child

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1. Ante, pp. 59-61.
2. Robinson: op. cit., p. 12.
3. Ibid.

is ordinarily accustomed. The Sheridans remind us that it should be as "simple and concrete and straightforward as possible."¹ Weigle and Tweedy mention this characteristic of the language as one of the qualities essential for family worship.²

The principle of adaptation to age levels in the group will determine the materials used in family worship. The problems of selection of materials will be considered in detail later in this chapter.³ It is sufficient at this point to state that the version, or translation, of the Bible used in family worship, as well as the portions of Scripture read, should be chosen with care. Although not all hymns for family worship need to be children's hymns, the language and experiences of the hymns used should be intelligible to the children. The prayers also should be within the range of the children's interest and understanding.

Not only does this principle affect the choice of materials, but it will also determine the place given to various materials in worship. For instance, when the children are quite young, stories, music, and conversation will receive more time, and the prayers will be quite brief. As the children grow older, the prayers may be lengthened,

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1. Sheridan and Sheridan: op. cit., p. 19.
2. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., p. 78.
3. Post, p. 82 ff.

and longer portions of Scripture read. Later when the family is composed of adolescents and adults, devotional books may be used more freely.

Still more important, the principle of gradation will determine the themes around which the worship services will be built. In other words, the topics chosen for thought should be of practical significance to each member of the family. Concrete ideas, such as learning to work together, sharing joy together, loving one another,¹ should be sought out and used as integrating centers for worship experiences.

There may arise times when it is wise to plan a meditation which meets one specific need of one particular individual in the family. This can be a profitable experience for everyone in the family, since the family's experiences are closely related. For instance, this might be true when an adolescent is choosing a vocation or perhaps a college.²

Family worship should always challenge the interests of children and appeal to the esthetic, ethical, social, and spiritual elements in their nature.³

2. Family Worship Should Be Related To Life

The principle of relating family worship to the

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1. Cf. Battle: op. cit.
2. Cf. Ante, p. 54.
3. Cf. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, p. 44.

every-day experiences of the family is in line with what has been said about adapting it to the varying age levels in the family. The statement of the teen-age girl, quoted before, bears repeating: "If you want family worship to mean what it should to the children who take part in it you've got to tie it up to the things they are doing every day."¹ Duvall emphasizes the fact that to be meaningful and successful family worship "must become an integrated part of the total experience of family living."² Any aspect of life will die if it loses its vital connection with the rest of life. "Worship can find its true place only as it both feeds and is fed by other aspects of family living."³

There are many experiences of the family in which worship can have a normal and proper place. Duvall suggests church relationships, special occasions such as holidays and birthdays, recreational experiences such as picnics and trips, family conferences, especially those called to settle disputes, and efforts for worthy causes.⁴ There are also the problems which individuals in the family face, such as the one suggested above: that is, choosing a vocation or a college.⁵

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1. Sheridan and Sheridan: *op. cit.*, p. 18.
2. Sylvanus M. Duvall: Family Worship As A Phase of Family Living, in *The Christian Home*, Vol. V, No. 12, p. 13.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 14; and *Ante*, p. 54.
5. *Ante*, p. 73.

Family worship should be a normal part of daily life. There should be no feeling of a transition from one phase of life to a different one when worship is approached. As Tweedy says, family worship should be reverent, but informal, simple, natural, and free from all sense of repression and strain.¹

3. Family Worship Should Be Related To The Total Worship Experience of Members of the Family

Family worship should by no means be the only worship experience which a Christian has. Every mature Christian should have his own private devotions. Even children are taught to pray alone. There are also spontaneous, informal moments of worship which a child may experience as he watches the stars come out at night, sees a beautiful sunset, discovers a bird in a tree outside his window, or listens to rain on the roof. The adolescent too may have moments of deep worship as he reads the story of a heroic life, hears a lovely musical composition, or performs a task which challenges the best in him.

On the other side there will be many experiences of worship with groups outside the family, such as the Sunday morning worship service, the Sunday school departmental worship services, or the Sunday evening young

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1. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., p. 78.

people's meeting. Such experiences enrich a person's devotional life and influence his attitudes as he comes to family worship.

The total worship experience of each member of the family, so far as it is known, should be thoughtfully considered in planning family worship. An entire worship period might be given to sharing an experience of one member, provided the experience is of interest and value to the entire family. There may be some worship experiences which need to be reinforced by reliving them in family worship. Shields suggests using the story, memory verse, or song from the church school lesson.¹ The suggestions made previously regarding the aim of reinforcing the work of the church apply here.² Or it may be that family worship needs to supplement, or fill in something lacking in the total experience of individuals.

Whatever the need, it should be remembered that the worship experiences of each individual are an entity which are not, or should not be, separated into isolated cells.

4. Family Worship Should Be Varied in Form and Content

The principle of variety in planning family worship applies in several respects.

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1. Shields: op. cit., pp. 4, 5.
2. Ante, pp. 47-49.

In the first place, each devotional period should include considerable variety.¹ That is, there should be a combination of several elements in each experience, none being too long. For instance, one brief period of worship might include a hymn, a Scripture reading, a short poem or quotation, and a prayer. Such variety makes it easier to hold the attention of children. Since stories usually require more time, there may be less variety when a story is used.

In the second place, there should be a variety of materials in various worship experiences. Most people feel that all worship should include prayer and Scripture, but apart from these a great deal of variety can be achieved in the use of music, stories, poems, devotional thoughts, and pictures. Scripture itself offers a vast variety of material for reading. Ingenuity and thought are all that is needed to secure variety.

Materials may be used in various ways. One may read Scripture responsively, in unison, around the group, in dramatic form, as well as having one person read a portion. There are many things for which to pray, so that there need be no monotony in requests. There may be sentence prayers, unison prayers, silent prayers, as well as having one person lead the prayer. The use of various

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1. Cf. Sheridan and Sheridan: op. cit., p. 20.

materials will be dealt with at greater length in another part of this chapter.¹

Although there is value in a regular order of worship, a little variety in this respect is stimulating. Robinson says, "A hard routine will be detrimental to the spirit of family worship."² Even when the usual materials of worship are a hymn, Scripture, and prayer, an occasional reversal of the order, such as singing the hymn at the close of the worship instead of the beginning, will be a welcome change.

Variety of leadership will often quicken new interest in family worship. In the principle of wide participation, possibilities along this line will be discussed.³

"As family living presents a variety of needs, so family worship calls for a variety of expressions," says Duvall.⁴ Family worship can be centered about any number of themes, depending on the needs of the family.

Having spoken concerning variety, let it be added that there is value in a certain amount of repetition and regularity. Children like to follow established patterns so that they know what to expect. It may be wise to

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1. Post, p. 82 ff.
2. Robinson: op. cit., p. 12.
3. Post, p. 81.
4. Duvall: op. cit., p. 14.

use the same order of worship over a period of time. There is value also in the repeated use of materials to secure close familiarity. For instance, a Psalm might be used every day for a time while the family memorizes it; a prayer, such as the Lord's prayer, might be used repeatedly; or a theme hymn for a week might be chosen. Again there is value in the consecutive reading of Scripture, especially some of the Old Testament stories. There needs to be a proper balance of variety and repetition in family worship.

Some excellent suggestions have been made by writers for introducing variety into the total family worship experience. Sweet suggests an occasional picnic in the out-of-doors, closing with a time of worship on the thought of God's handiwork.¹ Wood mentions that the family might join together in a radio program of worship, making that the family worship for the occasion.² Again, birthdays of members of the family, anniversaries, and holidays provide opportunities for special family worship services.³

There may be some variation in the time and place of worship, although in this regard regularity has special value. An occasional worship service, for a longer

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1. Cf. Sweet: Opening the Door for God, p. 105.
2. Cf. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, pp. 55, 56.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 51-53.

period, at a different time, and in a different setting, may be quite effective. Wisdom must dictate such choices.

There is no excuse for monotony or deadly routine in family worship. Variety can be achieved in too many ways not to use it to add zest and interest to family worship.

5. Family Worship Should Provide for Wide Participation.

In planning family worship there should be opportunity for each member of the group, except perhaps the infants, to participate actively both in planning worship and in the actual services.¹ The Sheridans suggest that children be given as much responsibility as they will take.²

Rudisill points out the value of permitting the children to help plan the worship program. "When their suggestions and ideas are used in the group devotions they are more interested and more ready to take part."³ The children may express their choice of hymns, Bible stories, or readings. They may be led to mention things for which they would like to pray. Shields suggests having a day during the week when each child can use something connected with his church school lesson: a story, a memory verse, or a song.⁴ This plan might work quite well in some

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1. Cf. Robinson: op. cit., p. 12.
2. Cf. Sheridan and Sheridan: op. cit., p. 20.
3. Rudisill: op. cit., p. 6.
4. Cf. Shields: op. cit., pp. 4, 5.

families. Not only should the children be consulted with reference to materials, but also with regard to themes. Adolescents particularly may have some excellent suggestions along this line. Children should feel free to express themselves as to the order of the worship service or the way in which materials are used. Wood says;

"One of the best ways to stimulate juvenile responsibility and enjoyment in the family worship is to assign to various members of the family in turn the task of planning one worship-program a week, which shall be different from the others. Saturday night or Sunday morning is a good time for such a program."¹

Giving the children the opportunity to lead the family worship not only secures participation, but also provides variety in leadership, and is excellent training for the children.²

Every family worship experience ought to provide some opportunity for action on the part of each person, whether it be as a group or individually. No one should be permitted to sit passively during family worship. It may be only in the singing of a hymn, the saying of a verse of Scripture in unison, or the conversation following the reading of the Scripture, but in some way each person should participate actively and directly in the worship experience.

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1. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, p. 51.
2. Ante, p. 78.

D. Materials of Worship
And Their Use in Family Worship

The usual procedure for family worship includes a brief Bible reading, a prayer by an adult, and a hymn, which may come either first or last and may be with or without accompaniment.¹ Some families omit the hymn, but all family worship includes the Bible reading and prayer. However it is certainly not necessary to limit family worship to these materials. The wide range of possible materials was suggested in the discussion of variety.² Wood says: "Because of greatly enlarged resources in material and method, family worship can be made far more interesting and constructive than it sometimes was in more prosaic days."³

In the following discussion of materials for family worship, three things will be considered: first, the relative importance and proper place of the material in family worship; second, guiding rules for the selection of the material for family worship; and finally, suggestions for its use in family worship.

1. Scripture

a. The place of Scripture in family worship

The Scriptures will always secure a primary

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1. Cf. Askew: op. cit., p. 57.

2. Ante, p. 77.

3. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, p. 44.

place in family worship. There is no substitute for them. When presented properly, they appeal to every age. Tweedy says: "The supreme value of the Bible lies in its power to bring men into fellowship with God, and to make them like Him."¹ Fellowship with God is one of the comprehensive aims of family worship.²

It is important to realize that the primary purpose for using the Bible in family worship is not instruction. Tweedy puts it this way:

"The great essential is not that the child should know the Bible as a text-book, good as this is, but that the life of the Bible should take possession of his heart, control his thoughts and deeds, and transform him into the likeness of Christ."³

The Bible should be enjoyed rather than studied in family worship, though any thoughtful use of the Bible will increase the knowledge and understanding of it.⁴ The aim of family worship in relation to Scripture is "To focus the teachings of God's Word on daily life and to find guidance for specific problems."⁵

b. The selection of Scripture for family worship

There is one general guide which should be in mind in selecting Bible readings for family worship: that

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1. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., p. 44.
2. Ante, pp. 44, 45.
3. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., p. 44.
4. Cf. Askew: op. cit., p. 61.
5. Ante, pp. 45, 46.

is, the selections should be made with reference to the problems and experiences of the family.¹ Weigle and Tweedy indicate some of the particular interests of the various age levels as a guide in selecting Scripture.² Beginners are interested in stories dealing with the home and God's ways in nature. Simple truths concerning God and His way with men appeal to Primaries. Social instincts are being awakened in Juniors, and they are hero worshippers. Intermediates are making personal decisions and need passages which give a challenge to consecration. Seniors have practical decisions to make and need to have their doubts settled.³ These interests and needs, together with the particular circumstances of the family, can serve as a guide in selecting Scripture for family worship.

Some of the portions of the Bible which children like are the life and teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, the Psalms, the practical and personal portions of the Epistles, the great chapters in Deuteronomy, the flaming utterances of the Prophets, narrative portions of both the Old and New Testaments which give assurance of the presence and goodness of God, and some selections from Wisdom and Apocalyptic literature.⁴ As will be readily

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1. Cf. Sheridan and Sheridan: op. cit., p. 22.
2. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., pp. 48, 49.
3. Cf. Ibid.
4. Cf. Ibid., p. 48.

seen, this range includes the whole of Scripture. Some families may enjoy reading the entire Bible straight through, but in other families this could not be easily done.

Dorothy LaCroix Hull, in The Christian Home, suggests that Scripture for family worship may be chosen from the parents' own reading, from the responsive reading of Sunday, from the minister's text, from the stories on the Sunday school leaflets, according to the season of the year, in connection with public school studies, in relation to current events, and for guidance in problems or to give meaning to daily experiences.¹ One of the aims of family worship has to do with the enrichment of experiences or occasions of special significance for the family.² This aim should be a guide in choosing Scripture. Askew emphasizes the value of using portions related to special seasons. She suggests, for instance, at Christmas, to begin with some of the Old Testament prophecies and proceed to the nativity stories in Matthew and Luke; at Thanksgiving, to read some of the praise Psalms; in the springtime, to read selections from the Song of Solomon or the nature Psalms.³ Many families choose a birthday

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1. Dorothy LaCroix Hull: A Place for Bible Reading in Family Experience, in The Christian Home, Vol. V, No. 11, pp. 8-10.
2. Ante, p. 54.
3. Cf. Askew: op. cit., pp. 60, 61.

text for each child and this passage is read each year on his birthday. Over the years this Scripture means more and more. The same idea might be carried out for anniversaries.

In selecting Scripture for memorizing, passages chosen should have real meaning for the present as well as the possibility of increased value in the future.¹ Familiarity with selected portions of Scripture may be obtained by repeated use, so that the actual task of memorizing them is not necessary.²

The version of Scripture to be used in family worship will probably depend on the age levels in the family, the portion of Scripture to be read, and the individual preferences of the family. With young children a modern translation, such as the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament, will be valuable, especially for narrative portions. Some people prefer to read the Psalms in the Authorized Version. Others like Moffatt for the prophets. Some choose the American Revised Version for all reading. Families should be familiar with various versions and may have interesting experiences in comparing different translations of a passage. In some families, it might be best to select one version and use it consistently to avoid confusion.

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1. Cf. Sweet: *op. cit.*, p. 70.
2. Cf. Wood: *Harmony in Marriage*, p. 114.

c. The use of Scripture in family worship

Robert M. M'Cheyne in "Letter to A Boy" gives four rules for the use of Scripture devotionally. They are: Read it. Understand it. Feel it. Turn it into prayer.¹ Weigle and Tweedy suggest that Scripture should be read "reverently, but simply and joyously, emphasizing the element of pleasure as well as of devotion and instruction."² Its literary beauties and practical applications should be pointed out so that children see varied values in it.³

Children may be helped to understand Scripture by retelling the stories in familiar words, by introducing occasional comments and illustrations, by asking or answering questions, and through the use of good pictures and maps.⁴

The usual procedure in family worship is for one person to read the entire passage of Scripture. This is especially suitable for doctrinal and narrative passages. If the children read well, they may frequently be the one to read.

In order to secure wider participation some families have each person read a single verse around the group. This may be suitable for certain parts of

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1. Quoted by Robinson: op. cit., p. 20.
2. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., p. 49.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 49, 50.
4. Cf. Robinson: op. cit., pp. 26, 27.

Scripture, such as Proverbs, but it is apt to break the continuity of narrative portions. A better way would be to ask several people to read the words of the characters in the narrative and one person to read the action between the dialogue. This simple and dramatic form can be quite effective.

Unison and responsive reading are often used in family worship. Hartshorne reminds us that it is unwise to read prose passages responsively.¹ Psalms, however, are suitable for unison reading and some lend themselves to antiphonal reading. If a refrain is repeated frequently, one person might read and the group join in the refrain.²

Instead of always reading the Scripture, variety may be introduced by asking each person to quote a favorite verse. Or a passage which the entire group has memorized may be repeated in unison. Sometimes the story of a whole book may be simply told. Children enjoy acting out simple stories, especially the parables, and if time permits this may be done occasionally.

In selecting and using Scripture in family worship all the principles for planning family worship should be observed.³ Variety and wide participation are especially needed.

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1. Cf. Hartshorne: op. cit., p. 23.
2. Psalms 136, 42-43, and 107:1-32 are well suited for this type of reading.
3. Ante, pp. 71-81.

2. Prayer

Because of the nature of prayer, it cannot be discussed in exactly the same manner as the other materials of worship. Instead of discussing the selection and use of prayer, the desirable characteristics and the content of family prayer will be considered.

a. The place of prayer in family worship

Clement of Alexandria defined prayer as "conversation with God." As such it is a vital element in true worship. Without prayer, worship is not complete. Weigle considers prayer to be the central act of worship.¹ The importance of prayer in family worship is not indicated by the amount of time given to it, but by the fact that it is the climaxing act of worship. One of the comprehensive aims of family worship is "To release daily in each individual's life the power which comes through united prayer."²

b. Characteristics of family prayer

The most essential characteristic of family prayer is sincerity. No request should be voiced in prayer which is not truly desired.³ The leader should constantly examine his own inner motives and desires to make certain that the petitions he asks are sincere.

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1. Cf. Weigle: op. cit., p. 194.
2. Ante, pp. 46, 47.
3. Cf. Robinson: op. cit., p. 29.

Then he should try to make the prayer a real expression of the entire group's aspirations and desires.

Family prayer should partake of the essence of conversation. There should be reverence and dignity, but simplicity and naturalness as well. The tone of voice and the language should be that of every-day speech. Prayer is more than speaking to God however. Sweet emphasizes the listening side of prayer.¹ Moments of silent prayer can be meaningful if the family's experience in worship is quite mature.

Prayer in family worship ordinarily should be brief, especially if young children are present.² To be effective it need not contain more than a few sentences, if these are thoughtfully expressed.³ Our Lord's injunction, "Use not vain repetitions,"⁴ is appropriate.

Family prayer should be social, rising from the living experience of individuals. Occasionally it is well to have brief prayers by all present, rather than one long one.

c. The content of family prayer

Prayer is more than asking favors of God. The elements included in prayer are adoration, confession,

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1. Cf. Sweet: op. cit., pp. 85, 86.
2. Cf. Robinson: op. cit., p. 30.
3. Cf. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., p. 80.
4. Matthew 6:7.

thanksgiving, petition, intercession, and submission.¹ One or the other of these elements may predominate from time to time, but all should receive a place in family prayer.² The element of thanksgiving particularly needs to be emphasized in family worship. Too often it is neglected in the prayer experience of children, and they come to think of prayer as all asking.

The content of family prayer will be determined by the Scripture and hymn used in the worship and by the immediate experiences or needs of the group. Robinson says that family prayer should turn the Scripture and the hymn toward God by using their expressions in the prayer itself.³

The petitions in family prayer should not be limited to requests for the immediate family. There must be care that prayer does not become self-centered.⁴ Some denominations print a regular book of prayer containing the names of home and foreign missionaries, which may be used in family worship. The family may prefer to make up its own prayer list of missionaries whom they know personally or about whom they have heard or read. Names may be assigned to each day, and one person may read this list

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1. Cf. Robinson: op. cit., pp. 33-36.
2. Ibid., p. 33.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 32, 33.
4. Ante, p. 69.

to the group so that these names may be included in prayer. Such a procedure has value for the family in that the names of missionaries and lands of the world become familiar; it gives a vision of the world-wide scope of Christianity and of the importance and great purpose of prayer.¹

The question of prepared prayers must also be considered. Many books for family worship include a written prayer to be read by the leader or some member of the group. The weakness of these prayers is that they are not usually adapted to the specific needs and interests of the family. They are apt to lack life and reality. If they are used at all, they should be thought of as a stepping stone to original prayers. They may have a necessary place in a family which is only beginning to have family worship.

It is well for the leader to give previous thought to his prayer. A person inexperienced in praying aloud, may write out a prayer to be read in worship. Tweedy points out that this practice will "lift one above the common faults of aimlessness, dulness, and floundering."²

Memorized prayers have a place in family worship, but more as a supplement than a substitute for spontaneous prayers. The Lord's prayer or some collect may be used to conclude a spontaneous prayer, the entire group joining.

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1. Cf. Askew: op. cit., pp. 58, 59; and How One Family Handled Family Prayers, p. 3.
2. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., p. 80.

3. Music

a. The place of music in family worship

In speaking of the place of music in worship,

Tweedy says:

"In those periods when religion has flourished best, men have sung most. Without music worship has seemed imperfect if not impossible."¹

"In all ages hymns have been the prayers, the spiritual food, the creeds, the weapons of the saints."²

According to Barclay there are three things which music and song do for worship. They create an atmosphere and add to the spirit of worship; they are a means of giving expression to worship; and they unite the worshiping group, providing release from tension.³ Music can do all of these things for family worship. It may not be beautifully sung, but it has its effect on the singers. Wood stresses the great need for good music in the home.⁴ It need not be limited to family worship, of course, but it should find a place there.

b. The selection of music for family worship

There are two standards which songs chosen for family worship should meet. First, they should have a real meaning for all the family. Second, they should be the

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1. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., p. 33.

2. Ibid., p. 34.

3. Barclay: The Church and a Christian Society, p. 202.

4. Cf. Wood: Building Spiritual Foundations, p. 20.

best from the standpoint of the thought expressed, the poetry, and the music.¹

Where there are young children, it is wise to use children's hymns part of the time. One or two verses of these can be learned by repetition.² However, the great hymns of the church should also be introduced, for as Askew says: "Hymns that have been tested by time furnish our most authentic Christian experience outside the Bible itself."³ Hymns that have a pictorial quality and that emphasize trust and obedience appeal to children. These should be marked by simplicity, but not inanity, should be objective, rather than subjective, should be concrete, active, and reverent.⁴ Adolescents enjoy hymns which contain high ideals of duty and service and which appeal to the conscience and invigorate the will.⁵

Tweedy lists six standards for judging the thought and poetry of hymns to be used in worship: It should possess literary merit, be rich in religious values, contain true conceptions of God and of our relation to Him, contain wholesome imagery, be marked by healthy sentiment, and be true to life.⁶ The melody of the music should be simple, lyrical, and flowing; the harmony should be rich,

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1. Cf. Wood: Growing Together in the Family, p. 122.
2. Cf. Robinson: op. cit., p. 16.
3. Askew: op. cit., p. 62.
4. Cf. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., p. 39.
5. Cf. Ibid.
6. Ibid., pp. 35-37.

but not complicated, the rhythm should be marked and vigorous, but not irreverent. There should be a suitable relation between the music and the thought expressed.¹

c. The use of music in family worship

Music in family worship provides an opportunity for wide participation.² No emphasis need be placed on the quality of the music produced, but understanding participation should be stressed. If the group cannot or will not sing, a hymn may be read aloud in unison.³

For young children some of the words and expressions in hymns may need to be explained. The story of the hymn or a story illustrating its meaning will illuminate the hymn for children. There are books available which contain such stories.

The Haywards tell the following story of one family's experience with hymns:

"A mother wanted to introduce her daughters to the great hymns of the Church. She began to make with them a loose-leaf scrapbook collection of hymns and pictures to accompany them. To choose the hymn, select the picture that fitted it; prepare a brief write-up of the meaning and history of the hymn, the life and work of the artist, and the meaning of his picture, was an enriching experience for both parents and children. . . Such a project becomes easily and almost inevitably a home worship experience."⁴

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1. Ibid., p. 38.
2. Cf. Ante, pp. 80, 81.
3. Cf. Askew: op. cit., p. 62.
4. Hayward and Hayward: The Home and Christian Living, pp. 130, 131.

4. Stories

a. The place of stories in family worship

There is no question of the importance of Bible stories in family worship, especially when there are small children. But besides stories from the Bible, stories from the lives of missionaries and heroes of the faith may also be used in family worship.¹ The stories of hymns, mentioned in connection with the use of music, may be used.² As the family grows up, a simplified edition of Pilgrim's Progress or some other good book may be read aloud as a part of family worship.³

The place given to stories will depend largely on the time spent in family worship. If only a few minutes are available, stories may have to be omitted from the regular worship and another hour set aside for story telling. Stories should be regarded as a supplementary rather than an essential material in family worship.

b. The selection of stories for family worship

The suggestions made for selecting Scripture for family worship apply also to the selection of Bible stories.⁴ Sweet points out that Bible stories for children

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1. Cf. Weigle and Tweedy: *op. cit.*, p. 79.
2. Ante, p. 95.
3. Cf. Wood: *Building Spiritual Foundations*, p. 55.
4. Ante, pp. 83-86.

should have a "feeling" meaning, as well as a "rational" meaning.¹ That is, they should have an emotional appeal. This qualification applies to extra-Biblical as well as Bible stories. Extra-Biblical stories for family worship should be brief and simple, with a single thought. If a longer book is read it should be chosen carefully to hold the interest of the group.

c. The use of stories in family worship

Stories may be either told or read. For young children it is better to tell a story simply and directly. However, sometimes very young children enjoy listening to a well-read story. Consecutive reading from a good Bible-story book is an excellent way to familiarize the family with the narrative portions of Scripture.

5. Poetry

a. The place of poetry in family worship

Poetry should never be used just for its own sake in family worship. Unless it makes a definite contribution to the worship experience, it is better omitted. But occasionally some poem or part of a poem which exactly fits the occasion may be found and used. The chief place which poetry fills in family worship is in hymns.²

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1. Cf. Sweet: op. cit., p. 73.
2. Cf. Ante, pp. 93-95.

b. The selection of poetry for family worship

The same standards apply to poetry to be read in family worship as were given for the poetry in hymns.¹ There should be literary merit, religious value, a true conception of God and our relation to Him, wholesome imagery, and healthy sentiment; the poem should also be true to life.² Poems chosen for family worship should be closely related to the theme or the occasion of the particular worship experience in which they are used.

c. The use of poetry in family worship

The person who reads poetry must be a good reader, one who is able to interpret adequately the meaning and thought of the poem to the hearers. Usually poetry will be read by one person, though there may be exceptions to this rule.

6. Devotional Materials

a. The place of devotional materials in family worship

There are available many books and periodicals containing devotional material for use in either private devotions or family worship. Some of these which are definitely planned for family worship contain selected Scripture passages, poetry or a brief meditation, and a

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1. Ante, pp. 93-95.

2. Cf. Weigle and Tweedy: op. cit., pp. 35-37.

prayer for the day.¹ Some families use such materials exclusively in their family worship. However, the weakness in their constant use is that the family does not have the creative experience of planning worship which meets their own particular needs. A family just starting to have family worship may need such material to guide them at first, but as soon as possible they should create their own worship plans, choosing Scripture to meet their needs and offering their own original prayers.

There are books about the Christian life which may be profitably studied if the members of the family are old enough to understand them.²

These materials should be regarded as supplementary materials which the family may use now and then to enrich their worship, but should not be the props on which they lean all the time.

b. The selection of devotional materials for family worship

The best use which can be made of devotional materials in family worship is the occasional use of carefully selected parts. These should be chosen on the basis

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1. Two books of this type: W. C. Barclay: A Book of Worship for Use at Table On Every Day of the Year; and O. Hallesby: God's Word for Today.
2. Two books of this type: Andrew Murray: With Christ in the School of Prayer; and O. Hallesby: Prayer.

of the family's need and interest. They should be within the understanding of all in the group. Not only should the words used be understandable, but also the thought presented.

For the most part selections should be brief. An exception to this rule might be the use of an entire book in a family of adolescents and adults. A safe guide is to present only one outstanding thought at a time, instead of trying to cover several in one period.

c. The use of devotional material in family worship

If the family chooses to follow the exact material as given in a book or magazine, it should be studied carefully by the leader so that he has clearly in mind its purpose. He may follow the outline suggested; or on the other hand he may rearrange the order of the material, omit parts of it, or add something to it.

When a selection from devotional material is used, it may be read or given in summary form. If it is long, the latter is probably best. Poems or striking quotations can be read.

7. Pictures

a. The place of pictures in family worship

Pictures wisely used stimulate interest in family worship, especially for young children. They should not be used too frequently, however, for two reasons. First,

interest can be maintained best by occasional use. Second, good pictures are not easy to obtain. Pictures are a supplementary material for family worship.

b. The selection of pictures for family worship

Pictures used for family worship do not necessarily need to be illustrations of Bible stories.¹ Scenes of the out-of-doors and daily life may be used also. The pictures should be large enough to be seen easily by the group and colored if possible.² If they are paintings, they should represent good art. Pictures for young children should not be highly symbolical.³ Those which illustrate life in other lands or times should be accurate in details.

c. The use of pictures in family worship

Pictures may be used in family worship either indirectly to create an atmosphere for worship or directly for illustration. If a picture used for background requires explanation, it should be given at the beginning so that the picture can be enjoyed. Details of pictures used for the purpose of illustration may need to be explained. In so far as possible, pictures in family worship should be enjoyed rather than studied.⁴ The story

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1. Cf. Powell: op. cit., pp. 148-149.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 151.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 150.
4. Cf. Ibid., p. 156, 157.

connected with a painting may be told as a part of the worship. Or the passage of Scripture which formed the artist's basis for the painting may be read.

8. Conversation and Discussion

Conversation and discussion are sure to be a part of family worship. The informal nature of family worship makes conversation necessary. This is true especially if there are small children. However, if only a few minutes are available for worship, conversation and discussion should be kept to a minimum.

The conversation preceding the period of worship is important in setting the tone for worship. If the worship period follows a meal, the conversation may often be guided into channels which lead naturally to worship. One family directed the conversation at the dinner table to a topic of community or world interest. Then following the meal they had prayer about the matter.¹ Another family had a small bulletin-board on the wall of the breakfast room. Each day a different picture was placed there, with a brief, related quotation from Scripture, poetry, or prose. This center of interest formed a springboard for the dinner conversation.² Such procedures not only prepare the way

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1. Building a Christian Home, p. 31.
2. Elizabeth Teal: Leavening Our Daily Bread, in The Christian Home, Vol. VI, No. 2, p. 18.

for worship, but also keep the dinner conversation on a higher plane than is usual.

Conversation within family worship must be carefully guided. If a matter is to be discussed, it should be thought through by the leader ahead of time. The discussion should not be allowed to disrupt the spirit of worship by becoming heated. Everything should be directed toward the point of worship. If matters come out in the conversation which should be made a matter of prayer, they should be included in the prayer. If the conversation reveals a need and Scripture can be found which gives guidance in the problem, it should be read immediately.

E. Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to deal with the practical matters involved in actually planning a family worship experience. The principles to be followed in the planning and the materials which can be used were presented.

As a basis for the formation of principles and as a guide in the use of materials, some of the psychological elements found in family fellowship were first discussed. It was pointed out that the ages of members of a family usually include a wide span. If the family has a member who is unwilling to cooperate in family

worship, this problem must be faced. A time when all the family can be together is not an easy thing to find in the midst of the rush of modern life. The family knows each other so very intimately, that if individuals do not live as they profess to believe, it is sure to be known by the members of the family. When the family has guests a problem may, but need not, arise.

In setting up the principles for planning family worship those which would apply to all families were stated. These principles are an outgrowth of the psychological elements in family fellowship just presented and the comprehensive aims of family worship stated in the previous chapter. Family worship should be adapted to the varying age levels in the family group. It should be related to the daily life and to the total worship experience of the members of the family. It should be varied in form and content and must provide for wide participation within the group.

Two materials which are always included in family worship are Scripture and prayer. Besides these essentials, it was found that music, stories, poetry, devotional materials, pictures, and conversation may have a place. These materials were considered with regard to their place in family worship, guides for selecting them, and suggestions for their use. By a wise choice and use of these various materials, family worship can be made more meaningful as well as more interesting for the entire family.

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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A. Summary

The purpose of this study has been to show how family worship can be planned to meet the needs and interests of the modern family. Family worship was defined as "all the members of a family group joining together in an experience of fellowship with God." In tracing the historical development of family worship it was seen that the spiritual life of the church can be measured to a certain extent by the emphasis placed on family worship. Family worship had a place in the Hebrew home of the Old Testament, in the Christian home of the early Church, and in the devout home of the Protestant Reformation church. The modern break-down in the practice of family worship has been attributed to changes which have taken place in home life and in the attitude toward religion. But the changes in home life do not make family worship impossible, and the changes in the attitude toward religion indicate the great need for family worship.

In considering the values of family worship for the present day, it was discovered that any real worship experience does at least four things. It provides

fellowship with God, releases spiritual energies for Christian living, aids in the solution of problems, and gives meaning and value to life. Besides providing these things daily, family worship has other specific values for the individual, for the home, and for the church. It relates God and worship to the daily life and problems of the members of the family, trains in the art of worshipping, and is a means of Christian education for the children. The values of family worship for the home are greatly needed today. It unifies the family, symbolizes the sacredness of the home, prepares the family for emergencies, and makes the home a more pleasant place in which to live. The values of family worship for the church, while not as important as its values for the individual and the home, were found to be significant. It was seen that family worship aids in producing a strong and vital church life and in producing leaders, pastors, and missionaries for the church. It also prepares the way for public worship.

Many of the possible values of family worship may be lost if the family does not have definite aims in planning its worship. Aims determine the themes and the materials for worship and serve as a basis for evaluating the outcomes of worship. The specific aims for worship must be determined by each family from time to time on the basis of their own needs. But the comprehensive aims

for family worship, that is, those which apply to all families at all times, were stated. These aims were grouped according to their relation to the individual and to the home.

The psychological elements in family fellowship which have a bearing on family worship are the fact that there is usually a wide age span in the family, some member of the family may not be willing to cooperate in family worship, it is often difficult for the family to be together, the members of the family know each other very intimately, and there are often guests in the home.

Because of these psychological elements certain principles should be observed in planning family worship. It should be adapted to the varying age levels in the group; it should be related to life; it should be related to the total worship experience of members of the family; it should be varied in form and content; and it should provide for wide participation.

Scripture, prayer, music, stories, poetry, devotional materials, pictures, and conversation were all found to have a place in family worship. Scripture and prayer should always be a part of worship, and the other materials provide interest and variety. Suggestions regarding the selection and use of these materials were given. With such a wide variety of materials from which to choose, family worship need never be monotonous or uninteresting.

B. Conclusion

This study reveals two needs: first, a greater emphasis in the life of the church on the importance of family worship in the home; second, more help for the family from the church in planning family worship.

Each church should plan in some definite way to meet these two needs, either through a special emphasis at certain seasons or as a part of the regular program of the church.

The denominational boards should emphasize family worship and provide help in planning it through their regular publications as well as special bulletins.

The church which has an effective program for promoting family worship will find the effort well repaid in the deepened spiritual life of its people.

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