

Introduction

- A. Reformed worship is Biblical worship.
 - 1. It is worship of the Most High God in spirit and in truth.
 - 2. It is worship of the Most High God according to the second commandment.
 - 3. It is the worship of the church which she fulfills especially on the 1st day of the week according to the 4th commandment.
 - 4. It is worship which is simple and Christ-centered, and emphasizes the importance and necessity of the preaching of the Gospel.

- B. Just as important as Reformed worship as a church on the Lord's Day, so also is the continuation of that church worship in the home throughout the week.
 - 1. It would seem strange that the people of God only read the Bible, pray, and sing in church, but never perform such worship themselves in their homes during the week or in their Christian day schools.
 - a. Weak and worldly church members make their church worship apply only at the time required to worship God on the Lord's Day, but then soon return to their life seemingly little interest in spiritual things.
 - b. But, the faithful people of God are not so. The worship they enjoy on the Lord's Day does influence their life and that enjoyment of fellowship with God and fellow saints in the truth does continue through the week in their hearts and homes.
 - c. IN other words, having seen God face to face in the church service through the preaching of the Gospel, we would expect that the people of God would to desire that fellowship and worship of God in their daily lives.
 - 2. That desire is fulfilled in family worship.
 - a. Family worship or family devotions is the time set aside by believers and their seed for worship of God in their homes by means of the Word of God and prayer.
 - b. Family worship is what the people of God do throughout the week and is a means to prepare the family for church worship on Sunday and a means to feed the family during the week from Monday to Saturday and particularly at important times in the life of the home.

"FAMILY WORSHIP"

- I. Family Worship in the Bible
 - A. **Genesis 8:20, "And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar."**
 - 1. It is true that Noah was the only would who could lead the worship of his family and of the church, which was at that time only his family.
 - 2. Nevertheless, the fact that he and not his sons leads the worship illustrates the fact that both in the family of God in the church and in the family of the local household, the father must lead the worship of sacrifice and prayer unto God.
 - 3. That Noah leads in worship is the example that must be followed in the covenant household.

 - B. **Genesis 13:4, "And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD."**
 - 1. Again, we have a passage where the head of the family takes the lead in worship.
 - 2. Similarly, in this passage we have the family of Abraham which at that time was the church. They were not the only people of God of the OT Church, but his family was an OT manifestation of the church.
 - 3. Although it cannot be said of our families that our families are the manifestation of the church, nevertheless, the fathers must lead in worship just as Abraham did.

 - C. **Genesis 35:1-7, "And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that *were***

with him, Put away the strange gods that *are* among you, and be clean, and change your garments: And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which *were* in their hand, and *all their* earrings which *were* in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which *was* by Shechem. And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that *were* round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. So Jacob came to Luz, which *is* in the land of Canaan, that *is*, Bethel, he and all the people that *were* with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place Elbethel: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother."

1. Like Noah, Abraham and Isaac, Jacob also takes the lead in the worship of his family.
2. He gave the example to his sons to continue in their households faithful worship unto God, not just on the Sabbath or at special times in their lives, but also daily.

D. **Deuteronomy 11:18-21, "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth."**

1. The Lord through Moses called the fathers of Israel, the heads of the families, to teach their children the Word and commandments of God. They must saturate their children's education with the Word of God.
2. This verse shows that the work of the fathers with the family is a daily task.
 - a. Our knowing and learning the Word of God is not a once a week task.
 - b. Deuteronomy 11 shows that the fathers must be teaching their children regularly and daily.
3. How would they fulfil that task?
 - a. Reading the Word of God to their children and having their children memorize the Scriptures.
 - b. Praying to God daily for their children and with their children.
 - c. Singing together the Psalms so that their children would learn them and teach them to their children.

E. **Job 1:5, "And it was so, when the days of *their* feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings *according* to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."**

1. Job fear God and eschewed evil, and this is the proof that he was a godly man.
 - a. He rose up early in the morning to worship God for himself and his family.
 - b. He offered burnt offerings for his family, one offering for each child, for the forgiveness of their sins.
 - c. This Job did continually, that is, daily.
2. How often should we have times of worship and devotions to God with our children. Continually.
3. What should we do in our devotions?
 - a. Seek God for the forgiveness of our sins and for His blessings.
 - b. Speak to our children about God and call them to a life of repentance, faith in Christ, and godly thanksgiving.

F. **Acts 10:2, "A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway."**

1. The Bible is speaking about Cornelius before his conversion to the full knowledge of Jesus Christ.
 - a. He was a Gentile who had converted to the religion of the Old Testament.

- b. However, he did not know Christ yet who had died and risen again, as the fulfilment of the OT types and shadows.
 - c. He was a man already by the work of the Holy Spirit a very devout man, who knew the OT Scriptures.
 - d. We also notice that he feared God with all his house!
2. This is what we must do.
- a. Fear God with all our house.
 - b. Pray to God always with all our house.
 - c. We accomplish this by means of family worship.
- G. **II Timothy 1:5, 3:14-15, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also....But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."**
1. Here we have the history of Timothy's childhood and teenage years from the viewpoint of his spiritual growth in the Word of God.
 - a. His mother and grandmother taught him the Scriptures from his earliest years.
 - b. The Holy Spirit gave him faith to believe what his mother and grandmother taught him.
 - c. How did they teach him? Regular and daily instruction from the Word of God and prayer.
 - d. We can assume that they prayed together because so often the inspired Psalms teach us not only to love the Word of God but also to pray to God for His word and blessings.
 2. That is the example of what parents and grandparents ought to do for their children.
 - a. Teach them the holy Scriptures, not merely by bringing them to church for the worship services and for catechism instruction, but parents themselves teaching their children at home.
 - b. Our family worship has the goal of making ourselves and our children wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
- H. **I Timothy 4:4-5, "For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."**
1. We receive from the hand of God every day the creatures of God which are good and not to be refused.
 - a. We receive bread, milk, water, even wine from that hand of God and they are good.
 - b. We receive from the hand of God the gift of marriage, for those of us who are married.
 - c. We receive from the hand of God many possessions.
 2. What shall we do when we receive these things in God's good providence?
 - a. Let us receive them in thanksgiving for 2 reasons.
 - (1) God supplies us our daily bread.
 - (2) God gives us this daily bread as a blessing for Jesus' sake.
 - b. How shall we receive them with thanksgiving?
 - (1) Let us receive them with the Word of God and prayer.
 - (a) When you receive your food for supper, let us read the Bible and pray with our meals.
 - (b) When you receive the gift of marriage, be sure to receive your marriage immediately with the Word of God through the minister and prayer for your marriage.
 - (c) When you receive the gift of a child, be sure to pray together as a family for that precious gift.
 - (2) In so doing, we will sanctify these things so that we can use them to serve the kingdom of God and His church.
 - c. This verse demands that we have daily devotions or family worship at the very least as a means to thank God for all of the good gifts of His creation that He daily gives us in great abundance.

II. Family Worship in NT Church History

A. Church Father Tertullian in his treatise on "Prayer" writes, in Chapter 15 "OF TIME FOR PRAYER":

"Touching the time, however, the extrinsic observance of certain hours will not be unprofitable--those common hours, I mean, which mark the intervals of the day--the third, the sixth, the ninth--which we may find in the Scriptures to have been more solemn than the rest. The first infusion of the Holy Spirit into the congregated disciples took place at "the third hour." Peter, on the day on which he experienced the vision of Universal Community, (exhibited) in that small vessel, had ascended into the more lofty parts of the house, for prayer's sake "at the sixth hour." The same (apostle) was going into the temple, with John, at the ninth hour," when he restored the paralytic to his health. Albeit these practices stand simply without any precept for their observance, still it may be granted a good thing to establish some definite presumption, which may both add stringency to the admonition to, pray, and may, as it were by a law, tear us out from our businesses unto such a duty; so that--what we read to have been observed by Daniel also, in accordance (of course) with Israel's discipline--we pray at least not less than thrice in the day, debtors as we are to Three--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: of course, in addition to our regular prayers which are due, without any admonition, on the entrance of light and of night. But, withal, it becomes believers not to take food, and not to go to the bath, before interposing a prayer; for the refreshments and nourishments of the spirit are to be held prior to those of the flesh, and things heavenly prior to things earthly."

B. Reformer Martin Luther is a good example of family worship.

1. It is commonly noted by believing church historians that Martin Luther was a man of prayer and that daily devotions of prayer to God and meditation upon His Word. The busier he became, the more Martin Luther needed his time with the Lord in devotions.
2. In addition to personal devotions, it is also commonly known that Martin Luther led his family in regular daily devotions around his supper table. This resulted in what is known as the book, *Table Talks*, which record many of the things that Luther taught his family and visitors on many subjects during their mealtimes at the Luther home.
 - a. On Prayer
 - (1) **337**, "Upright Christians pray without ceasing; though they pray not always with their mouths, yet their hearts pray continually, sleeping and waking; for the sigh of a true Christian is a prayer. As the Psalm saith: 'Because of the deep sighing of the poor, I will up, saith the Lord', etc. In like manner a true Christian always carries the cross, though he feel it not always."
 - (2) **339**, "Prayer preserves the Church, and hitherto has done the best for the Church; therefore we must continually pray. Hence Christ says: 'Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'"
 - b. On the Christian life
 - (1) **706**, "A householder instructs his servants and family in this manner...."
 - (2) **710**, "In the Old Testament are two sorts of sacrifices the first was called the early morning sacrifice; thereby is shown that we first should offer unto Christ, not oxen or cattle, but ourselves, acknowledging God's gifts, corporal and spiritual, temporal and eternal, and giving him thanks for them. Secondly, the evening sacrifice; whereby is signified that a Christian should offer a broken, humble, and a contrite heart, consider his necessities and dangers, both corporal and spiritual, and call upon God for help."

C. Reformer John Calvin was also an example of regular personal and family worship, and also taught the importance of daily worship of God by the believer in prayer daily.

1. Reading the testimony of others regarding Calvin and reading some of his personal letters, we meet a man who lived very near to God in regular, daily devotion and worship of God personally and when married, with his wife and children.
 - a. "If all his published and unpublished works were translated, they would form at least seventy octavo volumes, which were prepared in the midst of constant preaching and lecturing, of unceasing care for the church of God, continued controversies with the opponents of the gospel, arduous struggles for preserving the doctrines and discipline of the church of Geneva, frequent trials from his enemies, and repeated indisposition, during the short period of thirty-one years, he lived and labored ever mindful of the coming of his

- Savior; and was distinguished by study, contemplation, watchfulness, thanksgiving, and prayer.”
- b. His pastoral letters reveal a man of spiritual warmth and Christian piety nurtured by regular and daily fellowship with God in prayer.
2. In the *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Volume 3, chapter 20, section 50, Calvin wrote the following regarding “Prayer at Regular Times”
 - a. “But, although it has already been stated above F589 that, lifting up our hearts, we should ever aspire to God and pray without ceasing, still, since our weakness is such that it has to be supported by many aids, and our sluggishness such that it needs to be goaded, it is fitting each one of us should set apart certain hours for this exercise. Those hours should not pass without prayer, and during them all the devotion of the heart should be completely engaged in it. These are: when we arise in the morning, before we begin daily work, when we sit down to a meal, when by God’s blessing we have eaten, when we are getting ready to retire.”
 - b. But this must not be any superstitious observance of hours, whereby, as if paying our debt to God, we imagine ourselves paid up for the remaining hours. Rather, it must be a tutelage for our weakness, which should be thus exercised and repeatedly stimulated. We must take particular care that, whenever we either are pressed or see others pressed by any adversity, we hasten back to God, not with swift feet but with eager hearts. Also, that we should not let our prosperity or that of others go unnoticed, failing to testify, by praise and thanksgiving, that we recognize God’s hand therein.”
- D. Family devotions were also the good custom and habit among Reformed families in the Netherlands. A clear example of this is found in the life of the reformer and theologian Dr. Abraham Kuyper.
1. Although a man of great stature, yet he was Christian man who understood the need to have fellowship with God, not only in church, but also as family during the week.
 2. In his church history book about faithful saints of the past, Prof. Hanko writes that “he was a family man who revelled in the life of his own covenant family. To him and his wife were born five sons and two daughters. Family devotions were important to Kuyper. During the evening meal, Kuyper would gather also the servants into the family circle, read the Scriptures with them, explain these Scriptures to them, and lead the household in prayers to God. Mealtime itself was a time of discussion, fellowship, laughter, and fun.
 3. It was a yearly routine that in the Kuyper household “the old year passed away and the new year entered with Kuyper and his family reading the Scriptures and in prayer. This was a family custom preserved until nearly the end of Kuyper’s life.” (Herman Hanko, *Portraits of Faithful Saints*, ch. 49, p. 372)
 4. How does the old year end and the new year begin in your household? Lighting fireworks and revelling, or in worship to your heavenly Father? I believe that the example of Kuyper is best and most profitable for our souls and the souls of our children.
- E. The Presbyterian churches in Scotland saw the importance of the worship of individuals and households during the week, and the churches wrote and approved what is now known as the “Directory for Family Worship.” We quote here just sections 1 and 2 of the list of directions for faithful family worship.
1. “BESIDES the publick worship in congregations, mercifully established in this land in great purity, it is expedient and necessary that secret worship of each person alone, and private worship of families, be pressed and set up; that, with national reformation, the profession and power of godliness, both personal and domestick, be advanced.”
 2. “I. And first, for secret worship, it is most necessary, that every one apart, and by themselves, be given to prayer and meditation, the unspeakable benefit whereof is best known to them who are most exercised therein; this being the mean whereby, in a special way, communion with God is entertained, and right preparation for all other duties obtained: and therefore it becometh not only pastors, within their several charges, to press persons of all sorts to perform this duty morning and evening, and at other occasions; but also it is incumbent to the head of every family to have a care, that both themselves, and all within their charge, be daily diligent herein.”

3. "II. The ordinary duties comprehended under the exercise of piety which should be in families, when they are convened to that effect, are these: First, Prayer and praises performed with a special reference, as well to the publick condition of the kirk of God and this kingdom, as to the present case of the family, and every member thereof. Next, Reading of the scriptures, with catechising in a plain way, that the understandings of the simpler may be the better enabled to profit under the publick ordinances, and they made more capable to understand the scriptures when they are read; together with godly conferences tending to the edification of all the members in the most holy faith: as also, admonition and rebuke, upon just reasons, from those who have authority in the family."

III. Family Worship in Daily Practice

A. Who should lead family worship?

1. The father should lead family devotions.
2. The mother may need to lead family devotions if the father is not present.
3. The single believer (young adult, widow, or widower) if living alone should maintain regular devotions.
4. A young man (and young woman) in the home so that he learns under the guidance of his (or her) parents proper family worship.

B. What parts should family worship or devotions have?

1. Family worship should include the reading of Scripture. Read Scripture systematically. Read all parts of Scripture. Follow a reading plan that helps you read through all of the Scriptures in one or two years.
2. Family worship may include the explanation of Scripture during or after the reading is finished.
 - a. The fathers can explain the correct interpretation of the verses, especially those which are commonly twisted by false teachers and heretics.
 - b. For help in understanding the Bible, good Reformed commentaries or devotionals may be used to help us grow in our understanding of the Word of God.
3. Family worship may also include the singing of the Psalms and the Word of God.
 - a. Perhaps we are not inclined to do this because we do not sing well.
 - b. Then use the resources available on CD or mp3 to help you sing along the Psalms and Scripturally and soundly Reformed songs.
4. Family worship ought to also include prayer together.
 - a. Prayers is often the most difficult part of family worship. "What do I say?"
 - b. This takes work, but let the words of your prayers be honest, genuine, and influenced by the Word of God.
 - (1) Follow the example of the Lord's Prayer. Read the prayers found in Scripture.
 - (2) Read the prayers of other people of God and Reformed believers that are recorded in books.

C. What are some other characteristics of faithful family worship?

1. It must be regular, and the best practice to help maintain that regularity is to have family worship with your daily meals, which normally families will have together.
2. It must be frequent during the day and week because man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word from the mouth of the LORD. (Deuteronomy 8:3)
 - a. We receive daily bread from the Lord every day do we not?
 - b. Let us then in obedience to the Word of God sanctify that daily bread every day by the Word of God and prayer.
3. It should be diligent so that the family receives the maximum benefit from this practice.
 - a. For family worship to be meaningful, it must take time for the Word to sink into our hearts and minds and take root.
 - b. Family worship must have priority, and the family must resist the temptation of the devil to skip family devotions or cut it short because something else is more important.
4. It should be done wisely.
 - a. It would not be profitable for me
 - (1) To read 3 chapters of I Chronicles 1-3 or read in Reformed Dogmatics for one hour

during supper devotions would not be wise because some of the children would fall asleep and so those little lambs would not be fed with the milk of God's Word.

(2) To read from Scripture and pray without any application of Scripture or mention in the prayer about the trial or death of a loved one that has just affected the family.

b. Family worship must fit the family and its circumstances, and the father must see to it that the family worship is profitable unto all so that all are fed by the Word of God.

D. What are the benefits?

1. Young children will be trained in family worship to be prepared for public church worship.
 - a. How should young parents train their children to sit still in church and attentively? Teach them to sit still when father reads the Bible and prays. They must learn respect and reverence for public worship of God in daily family worship.
 - b. How shall the children learn to sing the doxologies and songs? Let the parents teach the children to sing at home, and they will be prepared for church worship.
2. Young people, especially the young men (and young women), will be prepared to pray in public or in front of others.
 - a. Family worship is a time when the fathers can allow the sons to lead the family in prayer.
 - b. The sons will learn how to overcome their nervousness, to focus on the glory of God, and then learn how to think about what must be prayed in their prayers, following the example of their fathers, elders, and pastors.
3. The children will know the history and doctrine of the Bible. (Psalm 78:1-8)
4. The family has opportunity to discuss the preaching of the Word and further benefit from the Word.
5. The family will grow together in the grace and knowledge of the Scriptures.
6. This is an additional means to maintain the holiness and godliness of the family in the midst of a very wicked and ungodly world.

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