

A Call to Worship

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Among the Patriarchs of the Old Testament the building altars was symbolic of making the worship of God of primary importance. While it is no longer necessary for us to erect physical monuments, the necessity of giving God first place in our lives remains. It has long been said that, "The family that prays together, stays together." This is by no means a guarantee of family unity, but the basic principle holds true that families who take time for regular authentic worship tend to enjoy healthy stable relationships. However, anecdotal evidence indicates that Christian families who worship together regularly are very much in the minority.

One of the greatest hindrances to family worship is lack of time. We tend to live at such hectic pace that occasions which find all family members together at the same time are few and far between. This is all the more reason why we should be intentional about making the most of the opportunities we have. Family worship should never be allowed to become a tick-box exercise in which we convince ourselves that we have done our duty to God. The purpose of worship is to make contact with God and to experience His presence through our songs of praise, the testimony of His word and the opening of our hearts to him in prayer.

Another hindrance to this invaluable family gathering is the negative associations many have of their own family worship when they were children. Dragging children out of bed at 6:00 am for long, lifeless, formulaic family worship is not the best way to enthuse them about the practice. We are counselled, "Let the services be brief and full of life, adapted to the occasion, and varied from time to time" (*Education*, 186).

We need train to our children that when they rise in the morning, their first thoughts should be praise and thanksgiving to God for the blessing of a new day. The incessant spiritual assaults upon our family are much too great for us to rush into the day without calling on God for strength and protection. We are admonished, "Fathers and mothers, however pressing your business, do not fail to gather your family around God's altar. Ask for the guardianship of holy angels in your home. Remember that your dear ones are exposed to temptations" (*Child Guidance*, 520). If ever there is a time when we need to bring our family together under the umbrella of God's love, it is now. As we place Him on the throne of our hearts, by His grace, our children will too.

Isaiah stands out as the major OT prophet. His 60-year prophetic ministry covered the reign of four different kings through one of the most turbulent periods of the history of God's people. As Elijah's ministry was a foundational attack on the pagan worship of Baal, it symbolically represents the work to be accomplished within our homes to resist the prevailing influences of secular world. Elijah's message is one which unequivocally calls for commitment. He cried, "'How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).

Key to his strategy was the re-establishment of the worship of God. 1 Kings 18:30 states, he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down”. Ellen White states that, “If ever there was a time when every house should be a house of prayer, it is now. Infidelity and skepticism prevail. Iniquity abounds.

Corruption flows in the vital currents of the soul, and rebellion against God breaks out in the life (Child Guidance, 517). The importance of family worship cannot be stressed too highly in terms of building spiritual and emotional intimacy among family members. Malachi 4:6 informs us the effect of the spirit-filled message will be to draw hearts together. This idea is repeated in Luke 1:17. Referring to the ministry of John the Baptist, the Bible says that, “He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS TO THE CHILDREN,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Effective Christianity is about building relationships first with God and then with one another. Our message should be one which facilitates the healing of relationships.

A key component of Elijah’s ministry is that it was steeped in prayer. James 5:16-17 states, “. . . The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. ¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly . . .” We are counseled, “It is the duty of Christian parents, morning and evening, by earnest prayer and persevering faith, to make a hedge about their children” (Counsels to Parents and Teachers, 110).

Children need to have religion made attractive, not repulsive. The hour of family worship should be made the happiest hour of the day. Let the reading of the Scriptures be well chosen and simple; let the children join in singing; and let the prayers be short, and right to the point (Christian Service, 210).