

## How to Have Family Devotions<sup>1</sup>

Pastor Dave Phillips

We can't leave it to Sunday School teachers, Children's Church leaders, and youth leaders to do what the Bible says we parents must do. "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deut. 6:6-7). How can we do this? Here are some ideas. Pick a few. Don't try to do them all.

- Start now. Family devotions should begin when the family begins, not when children are born, but when the marriage starts. The sooner you start, the better.
- Keep it simple and short. Consistency is more important than length or depth of preparation.
- Find a consistent time that works for your family - maybe right after dinner, just before bed, or around the breakfast table. A couple of times a week is better than none.
- Begin with prayer. Ask God to make his presence known and help you to understand what you read.
- Choose a book of the Bible and read a short section. There are many illustrated children's Bibles available. Our family has used [The Jesus Storybook Bible](#) by Sally-Lloyd Jones, [The Biggest Story](#) by Kevin DeYoung, and [My First Bible in Pictures](#) by Kenneth Taylor. The Bible app by YouVersion also has many [reading plans](#) available. It also has audio Scriptures that you can listen to in your car or around the table. Older children can take turns reading.
- Ask your children 2 or 3 basic questions at the end. This will help them be attentive. For children 7 and older, have them retell the story in their own words or act out the parts in the story. Ask if there was anything they didn't understand or if they have any questions for you.
- Pray. Have family members take turns praying on different days. Don't be afraid to pray for specifics like tight finances, reconciliation of broken relationships, and protection from sickness, accidents, and temptations. This will teach your children to depend on God for all things. Pray for relatives and friends who don't know Jesus. Pray for people listed in the Prayer Requests section of the bulletin. Pray for missionaries from Missions section in the bulletin. Keep a family prayer journal. Thank the Lord for answered prayers.
- Try to learn one Bible verse a week. Kids K-3 could learn the verse(s) they are learning in Children's Church. You may also want to teach your children the answer to the questions in the [First Catechism](#) or [Shorter Catechism in Modern English](#), both available in the church office.
- Use the blue sermon notes for kids (on the children's information table). Ask your children what they remember from the sermon. There are discussion questions each week for your children.
- Use family devotions as a time for reconciliation. Set a good example by asking, receiving, and offering forgiveness.
- Sing a song together. Most of our songs in church can be found on YouTube.

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to give credit for some of these ideas to Charles Wingard's unpublished article, "Family Devotions," Tim Challies' [Practical Advice for Family Devotions](#), and my parents for their godly example.