

Family Altar

by Ray Comfort

Establishing a family altar through daily devotions is crucial for the eternal salvation of your children.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:6, Psalm 78:4, Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21

Topics: "Family Devotions", "Child Discipleship"

Description

Ray Comfort emphasizes the importance of establishing a family altar through daily devotions, making it a non-negotiable priority for the whole family. He highlights the sacrifices involved in dedicating time, energy, and sometimes dignity for the eternal salvation of children. Practical points include opening in prayer, reading and discussing Bible verses, engaging children in conversations, and incorporating play-acting to help them remember biblical truths.

Transcript

Establish a family altar. Build it out of unmovable rocks of resolution. Your time of family devotions should (almost) be non-negotiable. It should be priority for your whole family. Don't be legalistic about it, but as much as you possibly can, put all other things aside before you postpone or cancel family devotions.

It will be an altar of sacrifice. You will sacrifice your time, sometimes your dignity, and your energy. For years, our kids heard, "Six o'clock...reading time." That meant that Sue and I dropped anything we were doing, the kids did the same, and we gathered together as a family. You will find that there are many excuses for not having devotions. You may feel pressed for time, tired, or you will want to catch up on the news of the world, or perhaps you will think that you don't have the ability to teach the Bible. There is, however, one very powerful reason why you should have daily devotions...the eternal salvation of your children.

Here now are some practical points to consider for establishing your altar:

1. Open in prayer. If you are a male, take the lead. If you are a single parent, step into the role of a confident leader. If you are not used to praying out loud, have everyone close their eyes while you pray so that they won't see you. Begin by thanking God for your family and then simply ask Him to open His Word to each of you. As time goes by, ask one of the children to open in prayer, to build up their confidence when it comes to public prayer. It is wise to keep public prayer reasonably short.

2. Open the Bible. Don't worry about your lack of "teaching" ability. Simply read five verses from one of the Gospels. Then have each of the family members read five verses, stopping now and then and asking what they think a particular verse means. Go through the verses beforehand and prepare some questions. Be ready for (and don't be discouraged by) a regular "I dunno." Tell them what you think the verse means, and carry on with the reading. Follow any cross-references.

3. Open the hearts of your children. Deliberately draw your kids out of themselves. Talk around the world. It doesn't matter if the subject doesn't relate directly to the reading. Let the conversation swing to what they have done that day. Let them express their desires and thoughts. Communicate with them. Show interest in their interests. This can be a time for building relationships. If you want to make life long friends of your children, start while they are young. Don't wait until they are teenagers to do this. It may be too late.

4. Forget your inhibitions. Don't worry about your dignity. Play act with your kids when they are small. Be Goliath, and let each of them have a turn at being David. Have them throw a cushion or something at you, and fall down when you get hit. Act out Daniel in the lion's den. Be a lion. Roar. Play out a Bible story with them whenever you can. It will help them retain the principles behind the story. If I remember rightly, when kids hear something, they retain 30% of what's heard. If they hear and see something, they retain 70%. But if they actually experience something (see, hear and participate in), they retain 90% (I can't remember the exact statistics, because I only heard them). Use the time when they are young and impressionable to impress upon them biblical truths. I was deeply into play-acting until one memorable day. I was rolling around on the floor doing something incredibly funny, when I looked up and saw that none of my children were even cracking a smile. It was then that I realized that they were no longer impressed.

5. Don't make the devotional time too long. Keep it to 10-15, perhaps 20 minutes. Have them repeat a memory verse (from the reading) together six times. Do the same verse each night during the week. If they remember it at the end of the week, give them some sort of reward (we often gave our kids a candy bar). The reward is important. We all need an incentive and a candy bar is a good incentive. Perhaps you could have them write verses they remember in a book, and review it regularly.

6. If you want to keep the attention of your children, thoroughly flavor the reading with anecdotes. An anecdote is a short story that illustrates something special. Jesus used them all the time (parables). They will make your teaching palatable. Make them short, and preferably humorous. We have plenty of these in, The Evidence Bible (Bridge-Logos Publishers).

7. Close the reading in prayer, asking God to help you and your family to remember the lessons they have learned.

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