



Setting up a family altar

The concept of a “family altar” can also be called family devotions. This is the time where the whole family can come together to read from the Word, discuss the portion they have read, spend some time in prayer and practically live it daily. The benefit of family devotions is not only gaining knowledge, but also relating to God together as a family.

Throughout the ages the responsibility rested on the husband to spiritually lead the family. However, the dynamics of a typical family unit has changed somewhat in society over the last few decades (single parents, children growing up with their grandparents or guardians, child-headed homes, etc.).

The reason why we have a family altar is to daily commit the home to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is an opportunity for us to teach children the ways of the Lord and equip them to be the salt and the light in the world.

Deuteronomy 6:5 -9. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 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. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. "

To devote our family to God remains a decision and a responsibility that each parent or guardian should make. Whom will you serve? Read the following passage from the Book of Joshua 24:15, *"And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*

I didn't grow up in a family where we had family devotions together? What do I do?

More important than how you do family devotions is that you do family devotions.

- **Set aside time daily or weekly where you and your family can spend time in the Word together.** Have a designated time. This helps the family to honour the time for family devotions. It also contributes to teaching the children to stick to their personal devotions later in life. Switch off all technology – TV, cell phones, handheld games, etc. that can distract the family during the devotional time.

- **Read a short portion from the Word.** Often, we resort to a book with daily passages for family devotion. There is absolutely nothing wrong in referring to it from time to time, but the Bible has the words and guidance from the Living Word. This cultivates the habit and guides the family, knowing that we can consult the Word of God in every season of our lives.
- **Let each person share his thoughts or interpretation of the specific verse(s).** Children who are too young to read or even lead a devotional time, can also share their thoughts. The Holy Spirit wants to and can share revelation with young hearts! Also consider the concentration span of the younger ones especially.
- **Pray about the discussed portion of Scripture and other prayer requests.** As you pray about the Scripture consider the following:
 - What does it say about God?
 - What does it say about me?
 - Is this truth a reality in my life?
- **Other prayer requests.** Give everyone the freedom to share their prayer requests. This should be a place where everyone can share their struggles. Bring the requests before God, asking Him for wisdom, help and answers. When children share an area that is very personal, parents should please assist their children with compassion and consider praying about it in their personal capacity. Be careful not to be harsh in your approach to personal requests. The family altar should remain a place where everyone can be transparent, even with their deepest secrets and struggles.
- **Share ideas on how to practically implement it.**
- **Keep each other accountable to be a doer of the Word.** Take caution to do so with love and God's grace.
- **End your family devotions by speaking a blessing over everyone.** Use the following verses as a guideline:

Numbers 6:24-26. *The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.*

1 Chronicles 4:10. *Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!" And God granted what he asked.*

The important thing is that children see their parents or guardians demonstrating how important God's Word and His principles are in their daily lives.