

# THE CHURCH

AT BROOK HILLS

## A SIMPLE GUIDE TO PERSONAL WORSHIP (Using the Brook Hills Bible Reading Plan)

Find a quiet place to be alone with God (Matthew 6:6). All you need is a Bible and a way to record your thoughts. As you begin, pause to praise God and express your desire to know Him more (Jeremiah 9:23-34). Then open your Bible and ask Him to teach, correct, and train you in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). Make sure that this time does not become mechanical or monotonous. Focus on being with God, engaging in His Word, and responding to His Spirit (Psalm 63:1-8).

### READ

Typically, you will read two chapters of Scripture each day. You may walk through the steps below after reading one or both of the chapters. Either way, read each chapter slowly, carefully, prayerfully, thoughtfully, humbly, and joyfully. As you read, look out for verses that you may want to memorize, and begin memorizing. Also, periodically review verses you have already memorized.

### EXAMINE

After you read the Bible, spend time reflecting on what it says and means. Ask the following questions and write down some of your thoughts in response. You don't necessarily have to answer every question. Just use them as a guide to help you examine what you have read.

- What is happening in this passage?
- What words, phrases, or ideas seem particularly important?
- What does this text teach you about the gospel?
  - (Character of God) What does this text teach you about God?
  - (Sinfulness of Man) What does this text teach you about man?
  - (Sufficiency of Christ) What does this text teach you about who Christ is and why we need Him?
  - (Necessity of Faith) What does this text teach you about trusting and following Christ?
  - (Urgency of Eternity) What does this text teach you about the hope of heaven or the horror of hell?

### APPLY

After examining the Word, apply it to your life. Ask the following questions based upon the text(s) and write down your thoughts in response. Again, you don't have to answer every question.

- What sin(s) do I need to repent of and/or avoid?
- What truth(s) do I need to believe?
- What command(s) do I need to obey (what do I need to give up, stop doing, start doing, or continue doing)?
- What principle(s) need to change the way I think, speak, and/or act, and how will I implement this change?
- What relationship(s) do I need to establish, strengthen, or change?
- By the power of God's Spirit, what can I do *today* to apply God's Word to my life?

### PRAY

Pray according to your examination and application of the text(s), asking God to change your heart, mind, attitudes, actions, and relationships based on the time you've spent in His Word. Let this specific praying lead you more generally to...

- Praise—Worship God for who He is.
- Repent—Confess your sin to God and acknowledging your need for Jesus.
- Ask—Intercede for particular needs in your life and other's lives.
- Yield—Surrender your life to following Jesus wherever and however He leads you.

Conclude your time alone with God by committing to share what He has taught you with at least one other person (your roommate, spouse, child, coworker, friend, small group, etc.). Specifically pray through your schedule for the day (or the following day if you are spending this time at night), asking the Lord to direct you by His Spirit in everything you think, say, and do. Finally, ask the Lord for opportunities to share the gospel with others, ask Him for courage to obey, and then be ready to take advantage of the opportunities that He provides.

## A Sample Journal Entry

**February 9**

**(READ)** Genesis 42

**(EXAMINE)** In Genesis 42, Joseph's brothers travel to Egypt because of their famine. Unbeknownst to them, Joseph (their brother whom they first decided to kill but then sold into slavery) is the one who is distributing the grain to those in need. This chapter is a good reminder that even in the most difficult of circumstances, God is in control. God has used Joseph's difficult circumstances to make him a leader in Egypt, and God is now using Joseph to provide for his family in the middle of their difficult circumstances. God is sovereign over everything, and God is always faithful to His people.

**(APPLY)** I want to trust God in the middle of this trial that I am walking through in my life. I don't understand why this is happening, but I believe God is sovereign and in control. I also believe He is faithful, and I know that He will provide for me in the middle of it all.

**(READ)** Mark 12

I am going to memorize Mark 12:30. It reads, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

**(EXAMINE)** So much is happening in Mark 12 as different religious leaders try to confront and trap Jesus on different issues. Jesus says many important things in response to them, but verses 29-30 seem most important. There, Jesus tells the scribes that the most important commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. He continues, saying that the second most important commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself.

God is the only One who is worthy of our love, worship, and devotion. God made men and women with different faculties: a heart to have emotion, a mind to think, strength to do, and a soul that is eternal, and we are commanded to love God with the fullness of all of our faculties. This is the first and greatest commandment; every other area of obedience flows out of this. Even loving others as ourselves is clearly connected to loving God with all of our being.

**(APPLY)** I want to see loving God as the greatest and first call on my life. I want to love Him with all of my mind: studying His Word daily, thinking about Him and learning about Him continually. I want to love Him with all of my heart and soul, having affection for Him that is greater than any other affection I have in this world. I want to love Him with all of my strength, obeying Him all day long and loving others as He has loved me.

I can think of several people that I am far from loving well. Specifically, I think of my dad and brother; I can grow so impatient with them. I also think of John and Susan, co-workers that I know don't have a relationship with Christ. I have not yet shared the gospel with them, and in this way I have not shown love to them. How is my lack of love for others connected to my lack of love for God?

I repent today of both my lack of love for God and my lack of love for others. I need Jesus to give me the kind of love that He commands here. I continually need a renewed mind, heart, soul, and strength so that I might love God with the fullness of all my faculties.

**(PRAY)** O God, guide my steps throughout the day, I pray. Help me to trust You as I walk through this trial. And use me to share your love in the gospel with John, Susan, and anyone else you put in my path. Give me courage to speak when you give me an opportunity to share, and grant me the words to say in that moment. Help me to love You as You alone deserve to be loved.

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## A SIMPLE GUIDE TO FAMILY WORSHIP (Accompanying the Brook Hills Bible Reading Plan)

The idea of family worship is both attractive and intimidating. The thought of beginning a new pattern of worship in the home can be overwhelming for those just beginning. This guide includes answers to basic questions that we hope will equip you to lead your family in worship.

### What does the Bible say about growing together in Christ as a family?

The importance of the family in discipleship is prominent throughout the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 78:5-7; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). Husbands are primarily responsible for the spiritual leadership of their wives (Ephesians 5:22-33). Parents, especially fathers, are primarily responsible for the spiritual growth of their children (Eph. 6:1-3). These are huge responsibilities, but God has promised to provide everything we need to lead our families well according to His design. As leaders in our home, the critical thing to remember is that God's Word must be written upon our hearts. Our faith in Christ and reliance on His Word should be authentic, tangible, and transparent.

### What are the benefits of family worship?

- Family worship brings glory to God. It is a visible reminder for all in the home that God is worthy of our time, attention, and affection.
- Family worship produces joy in the home. Jesus will bring joy to families who worship and grow together. The love of Christ will be more evident in a family where worship is central.
- Family worship affects change in the world. As families read, pray, study, sing, and grow together, they join from their homes in what God is doing across the nations while affecting each other's lives for generations to come.

### What should we do during family worship?

Keep it simple. Consider including the following elements as you worship together:

- **Read**—Read a portion of the Bible together. You may consider reading one (or both) of the chapters from the Brook Hills Bible Reading Plan. Don't worry if you've already read it in your time alone with God. Reading a chapter a second time will only reinforce what God is teaching you. If children are present and able to read, allow them to do so. Of course, you'll want to explain difficult words and concepts (but don't worry too much if you can't explain everything!).
- **Discuss**—After reading the Bible together, work through a simple process of examining what has been read much like you do in your time alone with God. Give everyone a chance to discuss the passage and consider how it applies to everyday life. Ideally, you will lead by example and share with your family what you learned in your time alone with God and the difference it has made.
- **Pray**—Consider praying through the key points of the Bible passage that you have just read and discussed. Ask God to change your hearts, minds, lives, and family accordingly. This specific prayer can lead to a more general time of prayer that uses the letters P-R-A-Y as a guide:
  - Praise—Worship God for who He is.
  - Repent—Confess your sin to God and acknowledge your need for Jesus.
  - Ask—Intercede for particular needs in your life and other's lives.
  - Yield—Surrender your life to following Jesus wherever and however He leads you.

Try to include everyone as you pray, even if this is on a rotating basis. Additionally, you may want to keep a prayer journal that enables you to keep track of prayer requests and God's answers to those requests.

- **Sing**—Sing or listen to music together as a family. If someone in the family has musical gifts, they may lead some simple songs. If no one in your family is musical, you can sing along with music from our Worship Gatherings or listen to praise songs and discuss what they mean.
- **Memorize**—Choose key verses or passages to memorize. You may want to work on a verse or passage for a week or a month. Either way, be sure to work together, taking time to understand what you are memorizing. Periodically, set aside time to review verses over the course of the year.

## Frequently Asked Questions About Family Worship

### 1. What if a father or mother is not a Christian?

The commands regarding family discipleship in the Bible assume believing parents. Of course, this is not always the case. In those instances where the father is not a follower of Christ, the mother will need to take the initiative for leading family worship in a non-offensive and non-threatening way. In the case of a mother not being a follower of Christ, the father should lead with compassion and sensitivity.

### 2. What about a single parent family?

In this case, the responsibility falls to the single parent. This, along with the many other duties that single parents have, may present a significant challenge. However, God will supply great grace and everything we need to raise and strengthen our children in the faith.

### 3. What about children?

The dynamic of family worship will vary considerably depending upon the ages of the children involved. The goal for every child in the family is not the same. With young children, focus on the importance of knowing God, respecting the Bible, and worshipping as a family. With older children, dig into Scripture more, ask good questions, and discuss how the Bible relates to life and how a relationship with Christ changes us every day.

### 4. How do I keep things interesting if the age of my children varies widely?

Regardless of age, include children in planning, reading, singing, teaching, and praying as much as possible and as much as maturity will allow. Make sure to keep things simple, don't be afraid to keep it short, listen well, and be aware of what is happening in each child's heart and life.

### 5. What time of day is best for family worship?

Timing is far less important than consistency. Some families prefer to worship as the day begins. For others, evening may work best. Many families prefer to adjoin family worship to the evening meal since everyone may be present at that time.

Deuteronomy 6:7 says, *"You shall teach [God's words] 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."* Concentrated time in family worship can serve as a catalyst and support for "as you go, as you sit, as you walk" conversations about and applications of God's Word within our families. Encouraging and challenging our spouses and children in Christian faith happens best in the context of real, everyday life. Family worship builds consistency into our family routines and opens up many opportunities and possibilities within our family relationships.

**For additional resources for family worship, go to [brookhills.org/weeklyresources](http://brookhills.org/weeklyresources).**