

Family Devotions in *Your* Family

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What Kind of Devotions Best Fit *Your* Family?

This worksheet contains a number of self-assessment questions to help you think through what kind of family devotions will work best for *your* family. If you already do regular family devotions, it can help you evaluate if there are any improvements you want to make to your current process.

- *Who are we as a family?*
 - As parents, what are my/our greatest strengths in teaching things to kids?
 - As parents, what are our greatest weaknesses in teaching things to kids?
 - Are you most comfortable creating your own lessons or teaching something prepared by someone else?
 - If you are married:
 - Do you have a similar level of biblical education and literacy?
 - How will you make sure the husband is ultimately responsible for this process while at the same time richly exercising the wife's giftings?
- *What will best fit our family?*
 - Do we want to do devotions as a whole family unit, individually with each child, and/or as a couple, or all of the above?
 - Which of the following elements are important to us to include?
 - Reading the Bible?
 - Live teaching by a parent?
 - Teaching by reading others' reflections on the Bible (including catechism)?
 - Discussion?
 - Prayer?
 - Singing?
 - Quiet meditation?
 - Memorization?
 - Special meals/experiences/object lessons?
 - (To include all of these every time would almost certainly be unwise!)
 - Do we want to do the same thing each time or alternate between multiple options?
- *When and where?*
 - When would each family member be most able to engage with spiritual matters?
 - When is our family already together in one place?
 - Is this a good time to do devotions together?
 - When do we and our children feel the least sense of time pressure to get off to the next thing?
 - How often do we want devotions to happen?
 - How much time do we have? Is that enough for what we want to do?
 - If not, what will we stop doing so that we do have enough time?
- *What's next?*
 - How (and how often) will we evaluate how our family devotions are going and consider making improvements?
 - What will we do if we get off track and it doesn't happen as we planned?

Family Devotion Resources

- *Heidelberg Catechism*: Most famous for its opening and program setting question “What is your only comfort in life and in death?”, the HC represents the Puritan tradition’s attempt to educate children at its most pastoral.
- *Westminster Catechism*: Also most famous for its first question (“What is the chief end of man?”), the WC is usually considered the most rigorous and theologically weighty of the Protestant catechisms.
- *New City Catechism*: From Redeemer Presbyterian (Tim Keller) in Manhattan. A 52 week cycle best-of from the traditional reformation creeds (Westminster, Heidelberg, etc.). Contains adult versions of questions and a version simplified for kids. Available as a book or an app, which includes musical versions of the questions for kids (and the music isn’t terrible!).
- *Long Story Short & Old Story New*: From pastor Marty Machowski. In LSS (on the OT) and OSN (NT) there is a daily Scripture reading (working through key stories over the course of 5 days), but each day adds some new perspective or activity (e.g., day 3 connects the passage to Jesus each week, day 5 goes to a related psalm or prophet). The book is designed to be highly scalable for children of different ages.
- *Thoughts to Make Your Heart Sing*: Sally-Lloyd Jones, author of the *Jesus Storybook Bible* (see below) Contains very brief reflections on Scriptures. Appropriate for fairly young children.
- *Comforting Hearts, Teaching Minds* and *Training Hearts, Teaching Minds*: Both are by Starr Meade. CHTM is based on the Heidelberg. THTM is based on the Westminster catechism. Amazon.com says of CHTM “Starr Meade enables families with school-age children to participate in satisfying devotions together by taking them through The Heidelberg Catechism explaining its answers in short devotional readings accompanied by relevant Bible passages.” THTM is similar.
- *Everything a Child Should Know about God*: A basic (big font, lots of pictures) and light-hearted (bordering on cheesy...) engagement with several dozen key points of systematic theology.
- *Big Beliefs*: David Helm (author of the *Big Picture Story Bible*, see below). This devotional uses three weekly readings, accompanied by suggested Scripture passages, to introduce and explain 33 key concepts from the Westminster Confession of Faith (included in its entirety, in modern English), with questions following each reading.
- *The Big Picture Family Devotional*: David Helm. For kids 6-10. Three 5-10 minute lessons per week include: a basic Bible question with an accompanying answer in the form of a memory verse, a Scripture passage to read aloud, a devotional paragraph connecting the passage to the Bible’s overarching message, and reflection questions for family discussion.

Children's Bibles

- *The Jesus Storybook Bible*: Sally Lloyd-Jones. Widely acclaimed, the JSB goes to great lengths to take each and every story it tells (from both the Old and New Testament) and connect it directly to Jesus and the gospel. I've heard many adults say they have found it personally helpful and sometimes read it *without* their children! Geared for early to mid-elementary aged children.
- *The Big Picture Story Bible*: Similar to the JSB, though BPSB focuses on young children (2-7) using 26 stories to capture the flow of Scripture's narrative.
- *The Child's Story Bible*: Catherine Vos (wife of Reformed theologian Geerhardus Vos). CCEF faculty Aaron Sironi said: "It's easy to understand and goes from Genesis to Revelation breaking the stories into pieces that can be read in less than 10 minutes. My children nearly always ask me to read another section (whether I read one section or four). I especially like that, unlike many other children's Bibles, it tells most *all* of the biblical stories."

Resources supporting parents in family devotions

- *Family Worship 101* – Don Whitney. A 5 day series of videos and emails casting vision and making practical suggestions for family worship. Available from Crossway.org (Crossway.org/FamilyWorship101)
 - Website includes a sample 30 day family worship schedule pdf
- *Family Worship* – Don Whitney. A book version of the above that gives guidance to those interested in going deeper with Whitney's system.
- *Show Them Jesus* – Jack Klumpenhower. An engaging written call (to Sunday school teachers primarily) to keep the gospel as *the* central element of all Bible teaching to kids. It contains many helpful practical suggestions and re-orienting anecdotes for keeping the gospel central.
- *The Duties of Parents* – J. C. Ryle. A classic. The church I grew up in went through a season of giving this out to every parent of young children.
- *Give Them Truth* – Starr Meade. A book on teaching children, but with numerous potential applications for devotions, especially the various activities she suggests.