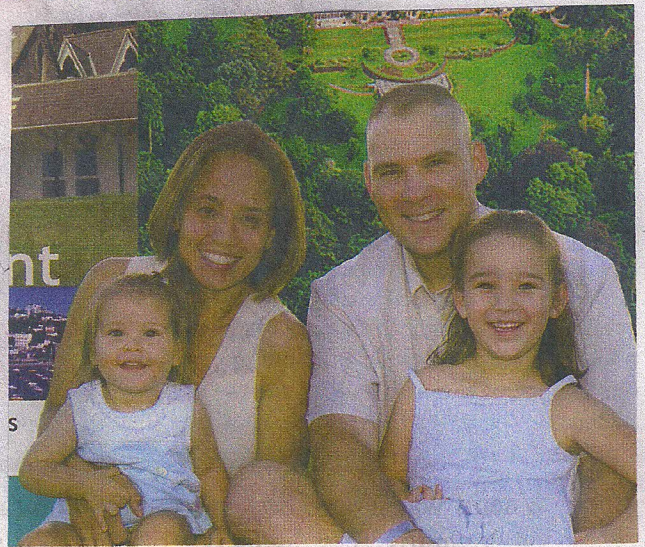


FAMILY WORSHIP

The best thing my parents ever did for me was to give me family worship! I am eternally grateful to them. (I mean "eternally") There is nothing more important in this life, and in the next, than learning to worship God together with our loved ones. The one thing we are sure to do in Heaven eternally, which we can do here on Earth occasionally, is spend quality time together with God and our nearest and dearest.



Today families often get it wrong – giving the children all kinds of material goods while neglecting to give them time of day. Families can be “like ships that pass in the night” – people living in close proximity but not really communing and communicating together. Each member of the family has their own agendas and activities, their own gadgets and private worlds. Sometimes we feel that we have lost the plot – why get married? Why have children? What is the point of it all? Both individually and as families we sometimes over-value doing at the expense of under-valuing being. We live in a hyperactive, multi-tasking society which is not so good at sitting still, being together, cultivating relationships. We have more and more means of communication (gadgets) but less and less communicating heart to heart. We know how to work the technology (well some of us do!) while losing the basic human skills of speaking to one another and really listening to each other. We are even worse at quality time, communication and being together with God!



Well, why not do something about it? Let us recapture the vision of worship, our hopes and dreams for marriage, parenthood, family life, discipleship. There is much more to life than the rat race!



Take it further

When I was a little boy, my mother and father, my sister and I, ended the day by having family worship. We sat down together, had a cup of Horlicks, and shared our experiences that day with each other. We swapped news and discussed any family matters. We then read a Bible story, each said a wee prayer from the heart and sang a couple of choruses. This was quality time together as a family binding us and bonding us together; building up familiness. This was also worship. God (whom we more intimately called Jesus) was the centre and head of our family. All four of us were His children. All five of us together were a team. The Bible bit was not tagged on after the family discussion. Jesus was the centre and focus. Our family was nothing if not a Christian Family. We not only had nightly, bed-time, family worship; we also went to Church on Sunday and after it the Sunday School (where both my parents were Sunday School Teachers). This meant that I had a wider Christian Family. Church folk were my baby-sitters. All this gave me a real sense of belonging. (Many people today suffer from a lack of feeling that they belong). I knew that God/Jesus loves me, my parents love me, my congregation loves me).

“The family that prays together stays together” was a saying which we took to heart, and have proved! Learning to pray together makes it easier to love and forgive each other. There is also the saying (in the Book of Proverbs in the Bible): “Never let the sun go down on your anger” i.e. don’t nurse your wrath to keep it warm”, don’t go to bed sulking, don’t bear grudges. This is good advice but how can we achieve it? Well it is very hard to pray together and hate each other. If you know that by the end of this day we are going to have to sit down and pray together, then it really helps to stop the drifting apart as soon as it begins. There is a real choice between praying for each other and preying on each other! Family worship really helps to heal things.

If you go back through history and read the biographies of famous Christians it is amazing how often you discover that they were brought up with such family worship. On the other hand there was a prison with 5,000 inmates in America. They were all asked if any of them had ever had family worship. Only one single prisoner said that he had. Two years later he was released because he had been wrongfully convicted!

Not all families are families! Some are dysfunctional. All families which are truly families are built on something substantial....shared activities, shared interests, shared opinions, shared beliefs etc. If you want to build a family what better foundation than Jesus? Society is composed of families like a brick wall is made up of many bricks. If the bricks are sound then the wall is strong; if the bricks are cracked then the wall is weakened. Society is as strong as the families in it. God created everyone to be part of a family and what is a congregation but a family of families? Families laugh together and cry together. Families go through the journey of life together with all its ups and downs, joys and sorrows, crossroad moments, mountain top experiences and valley times. Families are never more family than when they are engaged in worshipping together in the family home or as a family in the Church with other families. God made us for this and He smiles when He sees it working as designed!