

# Planting & Watering



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## through family devotions

**Introduction:** Think about how much attention people pay to their finances and how little people care about their soul. “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” (**Mark 8:36**). Have you ever been frustrated with not having enough time for family devotions? Perhaps you don’t even know where to start. This morning we will see how through family devotions you can plant and water the Gospel seed and watch God give the increase.

- I. First, we must understand from the Bible that we are called to **train** our children. **Godly kids don’t happen by accident!!**

When we speak of “devotions” usually we mean a study in the Bible for a time each day. Certainly we are talking about that, but what I want to talk about is much more than that. Fathers are called to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (**Ephesians 6:4**). We are told in **Proverbs 22:6**, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” We are told in Psalm 78:5-7a, that God “established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children. 6 That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: 7 That they might set their hope in God”.

Again, we read in **Deuteronomy 6:6-7** that after God gave Moses His Law—the Word of God, he gave a command to the people to teach their children. God said, “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children”. We are told to evangelize “every creature” (**Mark 16:15**) and that surely includes the children in our own home!

- A. Realize the **precious opportunity** you have. This is not simply about giving Bible knowledge to your children. This is about child *evangelism in the home*. If you have a child in your home do you realize the mission field you have? Most of the time you have a couple hours a week with a person to influence them for Christ. What missionary do you know that gets to have someone under their direct influence for 18 or 20 (or 30!) years?
- B. Realize the **powerful opportunity** you have. You are not just training one child, but you are raising up a whole generation. Do you realize within three hundred years you will have at least five hundred descendents from just one of your children?

**Illustration:** Story of Max Dukes and Jonathan Edwards.

What was the difference between Jonathan Edwards and Max Dukes? Jonathan Edwards had a heart for the Lord. He made sure his children were active in the service of the Lord. Jonathan Edwards served the Lord as an example before his children to the best of his ability. And tonight saints of God, Jonathan Edwards knew that godly kids don’t happen by accident. It takes diligence, commitment, doing the hard thing, and persevering and not ever ever giving up. You as parents are role models. You are all powerful role models. *Those of you here who are not parents, you are also setting a powerful example. The question is: What kind of example are you setting?*

We are called to train our children, but here’s the good news:

- II. When we come to the subject of family devotions, understand you are not **alone** in this. **Lamentations 3:22-23** says "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." Jesus said, "Without me, ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). Jesus promised "never to leave us nor forsake us" (**Hebrews 13:5**) and that includes the task of raising our children for Him. After he gave the Great Commission to evangelize every creature He says "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (**Matthew 28:20**).
- III. We have to ask ourselves next "What is the **goal** of family devotions? We don't want our children to simply be wise heathens with great Bible knowledge. The goal of family devotions is stated in **1 Corinthians 3:6**, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." God giving the increase is speaking of the new birth or what we call *regeneration*. It is the sprouting up of that new seed in the heart. The new birth is not something we can give to our children. It is something God alone does. We can plant. We can water. But God must give the increase.

**Illustration:** Think of a farmer. A farmer cannot bring the increase of his crop. He can surely plant. He can most definitely water. But God must give the increase. Farmers experience this miracle every autumn. God says, it is the same way with your child's soul. Your child cannot save them self. You ultimately cannot save your child. God must give the increase. The God who gave your child his or her **first** birth must also give the **second** birth too. Every parent wants their child to have two birthdays. Every parent lives for the day when they hear their child say, "Daddy, I've been born again".

There are at least six metaphors in the Bible for that transformation of the spirit that we call *regeneration*.

- A. **A new creation.** Right here in **Ephesians 2:10**, we read, "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them".
- Look at **2 Corinthians 5:17**, also **2 Corinthians 4:6**: "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".
- B. **A new life from the dead**, i.e. resurrection from death to life. Again right here in **Ephesians 2:4-6**, "But God...Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ...6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus". We read in **John 11:25-26** of this resurrection where Jesus said Martha (after Lazarus was raised from the dead), "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."
- C. **A new birth.** **1 Peter 1:23**, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever", also **John 3:3**.
- D. **A new heart**—changing a heart of stone into a tender heart of flesh. **Ezekiel 36:26-27**, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them". **Deuteronomy 30:6** calls it a circumcised heart, "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."
- E. **The good tree**—changing a bad tree that produces corrupt fruit into a good tree that produces godly fruit. **Matthew 7:17-18**, "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."
- F. **The miraculous increase of life in a harvest**—a dead seed is turned into a living organism. Paul said in **1 Corinthians 3:6**, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."

In other words, God has to work on the heart of your children. We know **Psalms 127:1**, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it". We know that no child can come to Christ "except the Father...draw" that child (**John 6:44**).

But remember you are the tool that He uses. Isn't it amazing that God uses tools to do His work? Paul cries out: "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14). God says to you "Who will go for us?" Who will preach the Gospel to your children? I hope you are volunteering and saying "Here am I, send me" (**Isaiah**

**6). 1 Corinthians 3:6**, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” God will give the increase, but who will plant and water for him? In the Christian home, it must be first and foremost, Missionary Mom and Missionary Dad. Paul said to Timothy: “that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (**2 Timothy 3:15**). Thank God for Grandmother Lois and mother Eunice!

IV. The question is **How** does a mom or a dad go about planting and watering the Word of God in the heart of their children? Now God will use you. But you’ve got to plant and water God’s Word in the hearts of your children. Your children need to get the Word of God planted in their heart and watered by **you**. A great way to do this is through regular family devotions.

We learn this from Deuteronomy 6. Remember if you are not planting, someone else will be. If you are not planting the Word of God, Satan will be sowing weeds. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (**Psalm 119:11**).

Look at **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with **all** thine heart, and with **all** thy soul, and with **all** thy might. 6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up”.

A. Planting and watering begins with a **Passion** for God and must be the foundation of the home. “Hear, O Israel”—you mothers, you fathers—before you can teach your children diligently, you need to do this: Verse 5, “...thou shalt love the LORD thy God with **all** thine heart, and with **all** thy soul, and with **all** thy might. 6 And these words...shall be” where? On your lips? In your mind? No, where? “in thine heart:”

If you are a Christian, you are a Christ follower. You cannot make other Christ followers if you yourself are not passionately following Christ.

B. Second planting and water is established by you making the Word of God a **Priority** in your home. **Verse 7** says about the Scriptures...“And thou shalt **teach** them **diligently** unto thy children, and shalt **talk** of them when thou **sittest** in thine house, and when thou **walkest** by the way, and when thou **liest** down, and when thou **risest** up”.

So you’ve got to be thinking about family devotions ALL the time! Talk about a commitment! You should be talking about the biblical principles of life every time you see your child! The conversation should always turn to Christ. Look at all the situations:

- Speak of Christ when you RELAX in your house—maybe for a meal or just free time.
- Speak of Christ “when you walk by the way”. Take a long walk with your children and speak of Christ. Or take a drive, and ask spiritually pointed questions.
- Speak of Christ when your children are “lying down” and “rising up”. This is a good time to have formal devotions.

But do you see that devotions is not just something you do at one time, but it is a minute by minute walk with Christ, and you bring your children along? It’s a culture and a **lifestyle** of communicating our wonderful Lord to our children. This is something that has to be a life’s goal for you: to mold your children into followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now if you are going to have any impact, you’ve got to form a daily habit with your children, and it’s got to be practical.

You’ve got to have a **passion** for God to keep it going, you’ve got to make it a daily **priority**.

C. And thirdly, you’ve got to have a practical **Plan**. If it’s happening all the time, you’ve got to be practical!

1. What you need:

- A **Bible**. The Bible is central during family devotions. You don’t ever need another book in that setting if you don’t want it. There are many helpful books, but you can share with your children what you are reading.
- A **Mouth**. You don’t have to be a great orator, husband. You simply have to speak what is written in the Word. You don’t have to be very creative. You simply have to be faithful.

→ A Godly **Attitude**. Attitude is truly everything. Think of family devotions as a heart to heart with your family. A joyfulness and a loving brokenness should be displayed, not an authoritarian air. They ought to see that in your heart. They need to see that you are broken over the Word of God, that you love God's Word, and that you desperately want them to love God.

2. What are you supposed to do? There are many things you can do and need to do. Bible reading, prayer, hymn singing, learning about missionaries, and asking spiritually probing questions should all be a part of your worship time.

→ Read the Bible—apply, apply, apply it to their hearts and context.

→ Pray—this prayer time is a great time to sense your children's spiritual temperature. You can also teach them to pray. If they hear you fervently praying, they are likely to follow your example and remember the reality of God.

**Illustration:** Let me illustrate how important this prayer time is by telling you about the kind of prayer time Missionary John Patton had with his father. So pray! Worship is better caught than taught!

→ Ask probing spiritual questions

→ Teach them the praise songs and hymns

→ Pray for missionaries—use "Operation World" book by Johnstone

3. What is the daily **goal**? To plant and water. That means the seed needs to penetrate the heart! We want to see daily penetration of the Word of God. You want to have a heart to heart with them every time you have devotions.

➤ Search their hearts to see where they are spiritually.

➤ Don't just read the Bible. Apply it to their life.

➤ Worship God with them.

➤ **Purpose:** The purpose is to interface with God and your children.

D. More practical suggestions...

1. If you are not having a family altar, start right away. Start tonight or tomorrow. You are preparing your children to meet God. There is nothing more important.

2. Teach your children during meal times.

3. Use a child's discipleship book like a question and answer format. There are many of these out there. You ask a question, and the child gives you an answer and a Bible verse. For instance, we use an old teaching guide from the 1689 written by a man by the name of Benjamin Keach. The first question is: what is the chief end (or main purpose) of man? The answer is: "to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever". Then the children give one or two verses to support the answer. On this particular one it is:

**I Corinthians 10:31**, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" and **Psalms 73:25**, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

If we are learning that truth that week, I will quiz the children around the dinner table each night.

4. **Wait** on God to give the increase. One thing about planting is that you have to have a lot of patience to see the increase!

**Illustration:** Once my daughters were watching me plant grass in my front yard. I planted and watered good, and they came out and wondered: "Daddy, something must be wrong! The grass isn't growing yet!" It's true that it takes patience to wait on the harvest. And tonight we need to think about the harvests that are found in the Word of God.

**Conclusion:** The key is not simply having devotions, a time with God each day. You need that. But it is about having DEVOTION to God in everything you do. It is letting God be God and letting Him do the work! We need to plant and water, and then **let us wait in expectation for God to give the increase!**