

5. *Special themes.* Special church days (Christmas, Easter, etc.) may be observed. Bible references about these may be read and discussed. *Missionary themes* may be used. The family might "adopt" a missionary family to pray for during the week or month. Pictures of the missionaries may be found in the Foursquare World ADVANCE and will help to acquaint the family at home with the missionary.

6. A *prayer calendar* may be set up, when each day specific requests are remembered. When answers to prayer are realized, these are crossed off and others added. This calendar needs to be kept current to be effective. Encourage members of the family to add their own requests as well.

7. *Suggested outline.* While no one can set up an outline for another family, suggestions may be made as to how this might be done. For example:

Bible Reading .....	3 min.
Discussion of Bible portion read .....	3 min.
Prayer (including requests) .....	3 min.
Music .....	1 min.
Total .....	10 min.

The Scriptures should have a vital place in every family altar.

The Bible admonishes parents to bring up their children in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord". This includes discipline and instruction. Even when one parent is not a Christian, the responsibility must not be shunned. It has been said, "You are what your children are becoming". The demands of the society today make us realize even more the necessity of the firm and secure foundation of the Christ-centered home — the one where the Bible is regularly honored by the entire family.

*"Every child has the right to a Christian home."*

Suggested Family Altar Resources

• *"It Didn't Just Happen"*, by Ethel Barrett, Regal Books. A read-aloud book with Bible stories written to be read.

• *"The Living Story of Jesus"*, by Kenneth Taylor, Regal Books. Using the *Living New Testament* as its basis, the four Gospels are combined into a single vivid narrative in historical sequence. Jesus, speaking the language of today, just as He would speak if He walked among us now.

• *"Seek"*, Good News Publishers, Westchester, Illinois. A quarterly publication including verses and comments for each day. Designed for family devotions.

• Available from Foursquare Publications.



# THE FAMILY ALTAR

FOUR SQUARE PUBLICATIONS  
1100 Glendale Boulevard  
Los Angeles, California 90026

## THE ELEMENTS OF THE FAMILY ALTAR

There are several elements which should be present at family altar time. While these are many and will vary from time to time, each family should carefully consider and prepare for the daily time together. Methods will differ because family units differ. The individual family, perhaps by trial and error, but always with the leading of the Lord, can arrive at the methods best suited for its family.

*What are some of these elements?*

1. *Bible.* Each member of the family should have his own Bible. Even the young child who is not able to read can "follow" in his own New Testament. While the means of including it will not always be the same, some portion of the Scriptures should always be present in family altar. Some of these might be:

- a. *Reading the Scriptures together.* This may be in unison, or with each member reading a few verses. One of the fine modern-language translations is profitable, especially with younger family members.
- b. *Recorded Bible stories.* Many fine records which dramatically present the Bible stories are available for children and teens. While it is not advised that these should always be used, they do add variety occasionally.
- c. *Drama.* Let the family members take turns preparing and dramatizing a Bible story for the others to guess. When the story has been guessed, then read the Scripture portion which covers this dramatization.
- d. *Quoted verses.* If devotions are held at meal time, some Bible verses may be included to begin the meal, such as quoting favorite or newly-memorized verses, or cards from the "Promise Box."

2. *Prayer.* Prayer is "talking to God", and it includes praise and thanksgiving as well as petition. Everyone should on occasion have opportunity to pray. Adults must not become impatient with children. Special problems or questions should be discussed and prayer made in their behalf. Testimonies to answered prayer should be stated, and thanks presented for them.

3. *Scripture memorization.* Most children have "key verses" or "golden texts" for memorization in their Sunday school lesson books. These may be used for family altar and the family can learn them together. When there are several children in the family, verses may be learned during the course of the week. Verse packets can also be used.

4. *Bible story books.* Fine Bible story books, or Bible-related stories are plentiful. Children delight in these stories, and they are especially meaningful when the story book and the Bible are used together.

"Oh, I wonder what Jesus is going to be doing today?"

Thus the excitement of a 6-year old child as her Daddy took down the modern translation of the Bible for their daily family devotions. To her, the Bible was alive, it was exciting — and while she did not realize it, it was shaping her life.

Is this repeated in your home — in your heart?

We are thankful for the agencies which are present in our society, and realize that each has an important part to play. Our society needs *government*; without it confusion and chaos would result. We need the *school*. Here we learn about the world and its people, and develop the minds which God has given us. Christ has established the *church* for evangelism, worship, fellowship and Christian education. But governments, schools, and churches are all dependent upon homes and the families who live there. It is the basic unit of human society, and the first institution which God established (Genesis 2:24).

The divine plan has not changed, for today God continues to focus attention upon the home as the center for Christian learning. We see examples of Christian homes in the lives of Christian youth and children — homes where the Word is honored, taught and lived. We also see children learning from another example to be inconsistent, uncommitted and uninterested in the things of God. The potential for dedicated Christianity exists in the lives of all children; the development of this rests with the parent.

*The kind of homes of which our society is made will determine the kind of government, schools, even churches which will exist in this society.* A truly Christian home is Christ-centered and Christ-honoring. And a Christ-honoring home will be a home with family altar — a regular time when the family worships together.

Why is family altar important?

1. It helps dissolve misunderstanding and relieves friction.
2. It sometimes determines the salvation of the children.
3. It serves as an example and stimulus for other homes; especially those of the next generation which are trained in such an environment.
4. It unifies the family.
5. It strengthens the life of the individual.
6. It symbolizes the presence of God in the home.
7. It provides a sense of security.