

How to Embrace the Messiness in Your Family Worship

Our only child turned 3 in November and, as I look back over the many days in which she has been under my direct influence, I realize that I still have absolutely no idea what I am doing. By some miracle, she is still alive and happy ... which is explicit evidence for the grace of God.

As a father, I want to do right by her. I just got done reading a book about the significance of the father-daughter relationship. The gist of the book is that pretty much her final outcome, her character, her happiness, her self-worth and her decision-making all depend on how I cultivate our relationship. I know many men who love this idea. This first thought that came to my mind was, "This girl has no shot."

Even though the cards are stacked against her, I can still point her to Someone who is a better father than I could ever hope to be. I want to cultivate *that* relationship.

Recently, my wife encouraged me to be a better leader in the home. This task seems absolutely impossible to me. When I go to work every day, I feel as though people see Seth Jones, the hard worker, the talented musician, the people person, the reliable man. My wife and daughter see through that charade and see my flaws—my laziness, my forgetfulness, my procrastination. This makes ministry in the home incredibly difficult.

Regardless, I decided a few weeks ago to institute family worship/devotionals after dinner. I read a long time ago about family worship times ... probably from some Puritan. These were times where the family got together, the children all in a row and upright, Bibles open, ears attentive. The father would read a Scripture passage and give a lesson, and the children's

affections would be enthusiastically fixated on Jesus. Then the children would be completely obedient and go off on their own to pray and fast for weeks and grow in Christ.

So I thought, "This is exactly what my daughter, Kate, would love."

Of course, this is not at all what happened. Our family "Devo" times are chaos. The Thomas Kinkade picture I had in my mind for these times has become more of a late Picasso that makes absolutely no sense and screams of disorder.

But we have stayed the course. One recent devotional is a good reflection of our typical times.

I sat down on our living room floor with my wife. Kate ran around the room for about a minute and then sat down.

My question to Kate: *Who made you?*

Kate's response: *God.*

(Success! Devo is working!)

My next question: *What else did God make?*

Her response: *Poop.*

(Technically true, but borderline heresy.)

My next question: *How many gods are there?*

Her response: *Two.*

My response: *Well, there is actually one God in three pers—oh, forget it. Let's just pray.*

Then it was time to pray. Michelle and I both prayed, and Kate closed it out with her "prayer." Her prayers often make no sense at all and are at times downright offensive. As close as I can get her wording right, her prayer was, "Thank you God in

heaven for the Lord precious for the night began and poop and living things and freedle froble dilly mensa poury house. Amen.”

But you know what? Kate actually loves family Devo time. Right after dinner, she runs into the living room, saying, “Time for Devo!”

Even though these family worship times are chaotic and disorderly, I trust that the Holy Spirit is using the time. I trust that through my faults and failures, she sees her daddy cares enough about her to talk to her about Jesus. To point beyond failure to a God who loves failures—a God who chooses to minister to failures through failures.

Dads, create a space in your day to pastor your wives and children. Yes, they see your faults and your shortcomings. But there isn’t a greater way to communicate this gospel than to show them godly leadership coming from their husband and father who admits his faults and yet finds his identity in the grace and mercy of this great gospel of Christ.

Jesus says in Matthew 9:13 that He came for the sinners, not the righteous. Your family devo/worship times might look clean, but they also might look chaotic and seem to make no sense. Human nature is chaotic and messy. Jesus met us in our messiness.

He came to the most chaotic of all people. So why set ourselves up for failure and think that our family worship won’t be just as chaotic? Embrace the chaos and the messiness. Praise God that He works in the midst of chaos to rescue His children.

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