



Do Something!

BY BRAD DITTMER

Family devotions. WHAT do we do? WHEN do we do it? HOW do we do it? These are questions we may ask, sometimes we have thoughts and ideas with answers, and sometimes we have NO idea.

Life is never dull for our family. My wife and I have been married for 26 years and have ten kids ranging in age from 3 to 24. We have multiple businesses, have homeschooled since our oldest was ready to start learning, and have worked in ministry for over 15 years, serving as lead pastor in our small church for the past nine years. Because I am a pastor, you might assume that our family, though busy, has daily family devotions. You would be incorrect.

We are a family that sometimes does great with family devotions or, as we call it, "Family Time." We consistently do 4-6 days a week. We read scripture; we pray, all the way from the youngest to Mom, then Dad. Every. Single. Person. Sometimes it takes a while. We will also go through our calendar for the day and look ahead to days depending on what is coming up. During these seasons, our family functions well. We have more unity, more connection.

However, there are also weeks, sometimes many weeks, that we do not have Family Time at all. Can I just say, my family does not operate as well in those dry periods. It is noticeable and something that we cannot allow to go too long. It was during one of these dry seasons that the Lord taught me that if I'm feeling overwhelmed and like we cannot accomplish everything we have committed to, it is not because God gave us all of those things to do. Rather, it is because we have added too much to our own lives, more than God expects or even wants us to do. One of the greatest threats to our relationships with our family, friends, and God himself is busyness. It is possible to overcommit, even to good things, which is why it is important to prayerfully consider adding anything to our personal or family schedules. When our family starts to consistently miss Family Time, my wife and I know that it is time to re-evaluate our family's commitments and make some adjustments.

So how should YOU do family devotions? You can do devotions with your family daily, weekly, or a few times a week. You can do devotions with your children individually or with the whole family. You can do devotions in the morning, at lunch time, after supper, at bedtime, or in the car between activities. You can read books or magazine articles and listen to podcasts that tell you exactly how to do devotions with your family. You can follow a plan or simply follow the Lord's nudging as you go day by day.

Basically, there is no wrong way to do family devotions as long as you remember one simple thing: Just DO SOMETHING.

You are not the author of that book you read. You are not exactly like or in the same situation as that person on the radio or podcast. You are unique, your family is unique, and your circumstances are all going to be a little or a lot different than others. As you learn and/or get ideas from other people, allow yourself the freedom to do what is best for your family, your unique family.

A fantastic way to begin is to sit down together, limit the kids freedom to move around, put all of the phones away, and pick the Proverb of the day, read it, and ask the question: "What part of this Proverb do you remember," and "What did you find important to you?" After reading the Proverb of the day and having some discussion about it, pray together. Whether that is one person praying or allowing everyone to pray, just pray.

Another easy way to get started is to pick up a daily or weekly devotional book from your local Christian bookstore and to use it as a guide for your family devotion time. You can even find resources online that will give you an outline to follow and get started. Remember that it is not necessary for you to be a Bible scholar to lead your family in devotions. You simply need to have a desire to learn more about God. Pick a scripture, read it with your family, and take time to pray together. Start simple. Set easy-to-reach goals. And once you have mastered those, you can add more. If a commitment to daily family devotions feels overwhelming, commit to once a week, and build from there. Just DO SOMETHING!

I wish I could say that we are the perfect example of how to do family devotions, but we aren't. Maybe your family is. If that is so, cherish that consistency and do not take it for granted. Remember that one too many extra commitments can derail your schedule. You must guard against that busyness. For the rest of us, don't give up. Remember the only people that fail are the ones that do not get back up after they have fallen. Taking time to have family devotions will make your family stronger and draw you closer to God. It's worth the effort, so make a plan and just DO SOMETHING.

Brad Dittmer serves as the pastor of Centerville Assembly of God. Brad and his wife Sarah homeschool their ten children. Brad is intentional about being part of the community and serves on various boards and advisory councils locally and at the state level. He and Sarah also served on the Homeschool Iowa Board of Directors.