

HOW should we approach God's Word?

Ask ten individuals to define the word *family* and you'll probably get ten different answers. Every family's approach to spiritual activity at home will be uniquely different from the approaches that other Christian households take.

- Some people prefer to use traditional devotional books.
- Others are comfortable reading random Bible texts.
- Some plan their spiritual activity around specific Bible topics,
- Others follow along, using a Bible story book with pictures, so children can use their imagination as they learn the stories.
- One family typically asks a member of the family to read a printed prayer from a prayer book.
- Another family invites every member of the family to contribute a personal thought as they go around the room in a circle prayer.

Jesus doesn't give style points for the formats we use. But that doesn't mean he doesn't care about our spiritual life. When we stop showing up at his throne of grace to worship him and seek his blessings, Jesus is offended and concerned.

God wants to bless our lives with his holy presence.

- He wants to see us wrestling with him for a blessing whenever we read his Word or speak to him in prayer.
- He wants parents and their children expressing their gratitude to him for all he does for us.

When we read his Word, God is actually coming to us. Our private prayers and our group prayers are reminders that God wants us to give us his good gifts every single day of our lives.

A beautiful example of the worship attitude God wants from us is found in a Bible story about a boy named Samuel. Samuel was in training, under the watchful eye of old Eli, a priest serving in God's Temple. Scripture takes up the narration from there.

One night Eli was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called Samuel.

Samuel said, "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

Again the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

A third time the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:2-10).

What to look for when you read the Bible

It is worth the time and effort to read the verses 11-18, which immediately follow the unforgettable answer that young Samuel gave to God when God called Samuel a third time. God's reason for calling Samuel was to instruct Samuel to pass a very sad message on to old Eli. God was about to punish Eli and his two sons for failing to obey God's will. This would require a great amount of courage for Samuel. But as we read on, we learn that God blessed the words that Samuel later spoke to the children of Israel.

For thought and discussion

How do we hear God speaking to us? (Think of several ways in which God comes to us to speak about his will and his plan.)

How do we know that God is blessing us when we have faithfully heard and obeyed his words?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, help our family remember the many blessings that you give us every day. Help us never take your gifts for granted. Teach us to come to you often to share our petitions with you and to seek your blessings. Amen.

Helps

Memorizing key Bible texts can be invaluable when a person needs God's comfort, reassurance of God's forgiveness and love, guidance, or when one is given an opportunity to give a witness of one's faith to an unbeliever.

Suggested activity

Make a point of recording specific petitions that have found their way into your family prayers. Occasionally go back to review the requests you made in a past time. Note how God blessed you or other people as a result of your prayers.