

Training: Devotions

Psalm 63:1 “O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee...”

Mark 6:46 “And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.”

Susannah was the mother of 19 children. Besides caring for her large household, Susannah homeschooled all 19 of her children. Despite her overwhelming, pressing duties, Susannah had a personal time of Bible reading and prayer each day. Even more special was the fact that this large family had morning devotions and evening devotions every day. On top of all of this, Susannah made sure to pray with each of her 19 children individually every day!

Most parents neglect training their children in the crucial area of devotions. (“Devotions” is one name for that personal time with God in prayer and the Bible that every believer should practice.) This probably happens because most parents are not spending time with God in prayer and Bible reading themselves. Every believer, though, needs to follow in the steps of King David in our text, Ps. 63:1, by spending time with God. This is probably one reason why David was called a man after God's heart. He loved to spend time with God. Like Jesus our Example showed us many times in the Gospels (our text Mk. 6:46), we need to daily meet with God alone.

Here are some challenges:

- **Read the Bible together while eating breakfast.** When America and England were godly nations, many Christian families practiced this every day! Our family has read the Bible together for breakfast since the children were born. We read a Proverb a day (31 proverbs for 31 days in a month). Your family may be busy or whatever other reasons come up but try to start the day off with God together as a family. **Susannah was also extremely busy with 19 children, but the family made sure to spend time together with God.** This trains you and your children to start your day together with God.
- **Start your day, parent, having personal time with God.** Don't make excuses. Some people don't like “early will I seek thee” and prefer to spend time with God at the end of the day. Don't give God your “scraps”. **You should give God both the beginning of your day (Mt. 6:33 “seek ye first the kingdom of God”) and the end of your day (Ps. 63:6 “When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.”).** Your God deserves the firstfruits of your day, and He should be the last thought and effort of your day. Read a chapter from your Bible. Maybe write what God gave you that day in a small notebook. Have a prayer list that you pray over daily or that you have divided with the days of the week: one day pray over missionaries, the next your church family, the next your close and extended family, the next day your government leaders, the next day your personal desires and goals, etc....
- **Train your children from infancy to also have personal devotions.** When our

children were babies and toddlers, we had the kids with us while we did our personal devotions. We would read my Bible and pray out-loud while they looked at a Bible story board book. When our kids were preschoolers, we gave them their own devotion notebooks (we made a big deal about it too; the kids loved it). At first, I wrote what verse the kids should read in their notebook along with a word from the verse they were to copy. Their scribbling might be illegible :), but they still were to try. As they matured, the word turned into a verse to copy or a question to answer from their Bible reading that day.

Why did we do all of this? Because this is what training is. Many parents wait until their kids are teens to do devotions. That is too late! The teens have no desire and eventually drop the practice. Other parents tell their kids to do their devotions. Remember: **telling is not training.** We were slowly guiding our kids into the practice of devotions. By the time our kids were reading well, our kids were doing their devotions daily with little assistance from us. Of course, we still observed them and looked over their notebooks and prayer time. But most of the training was complete.

- For the kids' prayer time, have the kids collect missionary prayer cards when you have new missionaries at your church. Kids love collecting things, and we put this little game into a very important daily practice. Our kids were responsible for praying over these missionary cards (I Thess. 5:25 "Brethren, pray for us."). As the kids looked at the pictures, verses, etc... on the prayer cards, they would be trained to pray daily for other believers! Also have the kids pray for each member of your family and give your kids a couple of things to pray about themselves too.
- **Like Susannah's excellent practice, pray individually with your kids.** Start off with just a minute or two. When the kids are older (like teens), pray together fervently over an issue together like national revival or a financial issue. Train them to pray and see answers to prayer together with their parents!
- **End each day with family devotions.** If it is a church night, you might choose to end the day together in prayer. Add variety to your family devotions by reading through a book in the Bible for one month, or reading a Christian novel or Christian biography until you finish that book, or having a Bible quiz game or who can open their Bible the fastest to a certain place in the Bible, etc.... After you read the Bible, pray together. Then send the kids to bed with a kissing and hugging time with the whole family! **When the kids are older, train them to prepare a devotion time themselves. This way your kids are trained to guide their own families one day.**

This article began with a woman named Susannah. Susannah's full name was Susannah Wesley and two of her 19 children would become greatly used preachers of God: Charles (who also wrote hymns) and John Wesley. Parents, don't forget to **train** your children in devotions.