



Couch Church

Evening devotions for families with young children

LAKESWOOD  **LUTHERAN**
CHURCH AND SCHOOL

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The family is the foundational unit of both society and the church. Because of this, it is vital that families be united in faith. God creates and strengthens faith through His Word, not only in adults, but also in little children. For that reason, remain rooted in the Word together.

God has entrusted parents with the calling and blessing of raising children. This task is not always easy, but God does not leave parents unequipped. As He entrusts children to our care, He also continues to strengthen and sustain us through His Word. Parents need the Gospel too. We cannot pour into others spiritually if we ourselves are spiritually empty.

Even so, many parents feel unsure about how to lead devotions or care for the spiritual life of the home. This resource is not meant to be the only way to do family devotions, but simply one faithful and practical way.

The format used here might be called "Couch Church." Children will remember the silly name, and that is part of the point. When evening comes, as it fits into your family routine, you can simply say, "It's time for Couch Church." The children gather on the couch, and together your family gathers around God's Word in a simple and meaningful way.

These devotions are not about doing family worship perfectly, but about regularly hearing God's Word together.

Further notes/instructions:

1. *This is worship. First and foremost, it is God's service to you through His Word. Secondly, it is your service to God. Therefore, conduct this time with reverence and joy.*
2. *This is also your home. Relax. Let God's Word bring peace and rest to your household after the struggles and busyness of the day.*
3. *An order of service is provided for you. It is recommended that you remain consistent with the order and prayers. You may be surprised how quickly children memorize the liturgy and responses.*
4. *The father ordinarily leads the devotion. If the father is absent or an unbeliever, the mother may lead. Routine and consistency are valuable blessings for children.*
5. *After speaking the leader's portion, speak the congregation's portion and invite the children to repeat after you.*
6. *As parents, it is our God-given calling to teach our children the truths of God's Word. Couch Church is designed primarily for encouragement and comfort through God's forgiveness in Christ, but it is also an opportunity for teaching. Because of this, it is beneficial for parents to meditate on the Scripture beforehand.*
7. *Remind your children why you are doing this. If they become distracted or disruptive, gently remove distractions and lovingly direct their attention back to God's Word.*
8. *If you would like to create your own devotions tailored to the needs of your family, wonderful! As you do, remember that God's Word both convicts us of sin (Law) and comforts us with forgiveness and salvation through faith in Christ (Gospel). Luther's Small Catechism would also be a good devotion.*

The Lord bless your worship!

Order of Service

Verses | This focuses our hearts

℣ *The Lord Almighty grant us a quiet night and peace at the last.*

☩ **Amen.**

℣ *Our help is in the name of the Lord:*

☩ **Who made heaven and earth.**

℣ *Restore us again, O God of our salvation.*

☩ **And put away your anger toward us.**

℣ *Make haste, O God, to deliver me.*

☩ **Make haste to help me, O Lord.**

☩ **Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.**

Confession | We daily need forgiveness

℣ *Let us confess our sins. Almighty God, heavenly Father: I have sinned against You. I have disobeyed and done bad things by my own choice, in thought, word, and deed. I also haven't loved others as I know I should. For the sake of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.*

℣ *Is this your confession too?*

☩ **Yes.**

℣ *God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and Has given His only begotten Son to die for us. Therefore, I forgive you all our sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Hymn | A song of praise

Suggestions: Jesus Loves Me, Now the Light Has Gone Away, Abide With Me, I Am Jesus' Little Lamb, Now Rest Beneath Night's Shadow, Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow.

Devotion | See the following pages

Lord's Prayer | Sung or spoken

A **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

Time for Prayer Requests |

L *...We pray this in Your Son's name, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*

G **Amen.**

Evening Blessing |

L *Preserve us, O Lord, while waking, and guard us while sleeping, that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace.*

L *Let us bless the Lord.*

G **Thanks be to God.**

L *The almighty and most merciful Lord, the Father, the † Son, and the Holy Spirit bless and preserve us.*

G **Amen.**

Devotion

Depending on the age range of your children you have a few options for devotion. For younger children (@1-9) you could be the sole speaker and present a law/gospel message of around 2-4 minutes. For families with older children you may do the same, but you also have the option of an open discussion where children would be allowed to ask their questions on the provided text. I encourage you to study the text you've picked, perhaps one of the readings from Sunday, and formulate in your mind how this convicts me of sin and how this points me to Jesus. You may also use the following examples.

Read Psalm 1

- What is your favorite tree? I love all sorts of trees but one of my favorites is the fig tree. The leaves can get really big and the fruit is tasty. Did you know the fig tree needs water to live and bear fruit? If it was planted in a desert how would it go and get water? Can it walk to it? No... For a tree to survive it would need to be planted by water or at least in a rainy climate. People aren't too much different from the fig trees. We need water, but more importantly we need forgiveness. There is only one Man who was perfect in every way. Jesus Christ who died to earn for us forgiveness. He is like a sink that never stops flowing water. God gives us this forgiveness through his word. That's why the psalmist says blessed is the man who delights in God's Word. God's Word is like water for our thirsty souls. We are given this water whenever we read and hear God's Word and when we go to church on Sundays. Just like a tree grows when watered properly, so also will we grow in our faith and in our good deeds with the water of forgiveness.

Read Genesis 1:1-5

- **(You could build up some blocks)** If there was a building, how did it get there? It was built by someone—a builder. When we look around at God's creation we are first of all filled with awe and wonder because there are so many things we don't understand and so many cool things to study and learn. But we can also conclude that because there's a creation there must be a creator. God is that creator. His creation was perfect. But that's not the way we see it today. As awesome as it still is we can all tell something is wrong. And that something is called sin. Sin is all that's wrong with the world. It's disobedience, distrust, hurting, and even results in death. When God made the world, none of that was there. But then Adam and Eve, the first people, disobeyed God. And **(knock the tower down)** broke God's creation. Today we live in that brokenness. So we turn daily to Christ. His mission was to restore a broken people to health and perfection. And He did. By His death on the cross God forgives us our sins and declares us to be fixed. On the last day He will call us to be with Him in His perfect heaven.

Galatians 3:26-29

- What does it mean that you're my child(ren)? It means I will take care of you, you share my DNA, I will love you no matter what... It also means that what I have, is yours. This is called an inheritance. In Bible times, the first-born would receive the main inheritance such as all the land, but every child would receive something. Jesus is called the first-born from the dead. Because he lived a perfect life, but died for our sin anyway, God raised him from the dead. He's the first-born, but through him we have all become sons or daughters of the most high God. In Baptism you were washed clean and forgiven of all your sin, and you were also claimed as a child of God—adopted into His family. Since we are part of God's family we know that God will take care of us, that we will be perfect as he is perfect in the life to come, and that he will love us perfectly. We get to enjoy life as forgiven children of God.

John 13:1-17

- Would you wash someone else's feet? The part of their body most exposed to dirt, sweat, and stink... It's certainly a tall task. But here Jesus does it. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, creator of all things... Yet He does what was traditionally the job of a servant. In perfect humility, Jesus serves His disciples. Humility is not a lack of confidence, humility is putting aside power, status, comfort, or prestige to do the loving thing. Humility brought our Savior to bear the weight of our sin. His status and prestige as the perfect Son of God didn't force him to do that, but in humility He did. So that He could show us perfect love and forgive us. Just as Jesus washed feet, we can too. Let's show love at all times to all people.