

The “Family Altar”

What is the purpose of an altar?

Scripture Reference	Who is mentioned?	Purpose of Altar?
Genesis 8:15-20		
Genesis 12:6-9		
Exodus 17:11-16		
Joshua 8:30-32		
Joshua 22:30-34		
Judges 6:25-32		

What is the “Family Altar”?

- Deuteronomy 6:4-9
- Psalm 78:1-8
- Proverbs 22:6
- Ephesians 6:4

What is the purpose of the “Family Altar”?

- John 15:1-8
- Ephesians 4:11-16
- 2 Timothy 3:14-17
- 2 Peter 3:17-18

What is the purpose of the “Family Altar”?

The “Family Altar” simply brings church to your home. These family devotions contain the same parts we have in our worship services:

- Hymns
- Prayers
- Confession
- Hearing and Studying God’s Word

Your devotion time will change depending on who is involved. If you have young children, you can use shorter, simpler hymns, prayers, confessions and Bible Stories. But it is still important to include all of these parts in your home devotion time. Children will begin to see that this is “church at home” and they will begin to realize that church really is important in their everyday life and in your family. As children get older you can add more detailed hymns, prayers, confessions, and Bible studies. We are not to remain on the milk, but move to the meat of God’s Word (Hebrews 5:12-14).

Other Hymns and Prayers (*With any children*)

As your children become more familiar with the hymns, you can substitute different hymn verses throughout the year that emphasize the season of the church year. Be sure to sing the hymn they are working on in Sunday School! Here are some other examples:

- **Christmas:** Hymn 85:13-15
- **Lent:** Hymn 154
- **Easter:** Hymn 200:1-2
- **Trinity:** Hymn 239
- **Thanksgiving:** Hymn 36
- **Reformation:** Hymn 262

For younger children you can use songs like:

- Jesus loves the little children,
- Peter and John
- The Wise Man built his house on the Rock

Be careful not to use just “Praise songs” but to use and sing hymns that teach God’s Word. Praise songs or hymns have their place, but we want to remember that hymns are instructional, and should point us and our children to the one true God and His work for us!

Other Confessions (*With any children*)

As your children become familiar with the Apostles’ Creed, substitute other parts of the Catechism. Use the 10 Commandments. Incorporate the explanations. Use the explanations to the three articles of the Apostles’ Creed. Use the explanations for Baptism, Confession, and the Lord’s Supper. These are wonderful tools for you and your children. Use them! Keep your Catechism close by. Review it for yourself and teach it to your children.

Adults should review the parts of the Catechism and explanations and use the Christians Questions and Table of Duties as well!

Other Prayers (*With any children*)

Starck’s Prayer Book is a wonderful resource if you are looking for sample prayers for you and your family. CPH has a new, updated version of the original that is superb! Using the Lord’s Prayer is extremely valuable, and sometimes using other “versions” of it can be refreshing and beneficial. Check out Hymns 455 and 458 in The Lutheran Hymnal as examples of this. Many others have been written as well. In addition to Luther’s Evening Prayer, you can also use Luther’s Morning Prayer which is very similar. The Lutheran Hymnal includes many prayers for various situations as well. These can be found in the front of the Hymnal (p.102-109, 118). Some of these use older language and may need to be updated if you use them.

Devotions (*With any children*)

There are two approaches to devotions: Bible Stories which take you through the Bible and Topical which strive to apply Biblical truths using modern stories. We all learn in different ways, but both are important, so alternate between the two styles.

Other Ideas (*With any children*)

Using parts of our liturgy in your family devotions with children are beneficial for several reasons. First, they are familiar because they have heard them before. Second, as you use them in your own home, you can discuss what they mean with your children and explain words they may not know or understand. This will help them to get more out of worship at church as well!

Here are some very important resources for your home:

- My First Hymnal (CPH)
- Teaching the Faith at Home by David Rueter (CPH)
- The Small Catechism
- The Lutheran Hymnal
- Holy Bible

Setting 1 *(With Young Children)*

Opening Prayer:

*Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep
If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.
And this I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

Hymn: Jesus Loves Me, This I Know

*Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong, they are weak but He is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.*

Devotion: from The Story Bible

Note: Children appreciate pictures. It helps them visualize what they are hearing. Use the pictures to explain the story. Ask questions along the way or use the questions at the end to make sure that they understand. It will also help them to remember! Review the previous story at the beginning of the devotion asking what they remember from the night before.

Hymn: Create in Me (TLH p.12)

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from Thy presence;
And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation;
And uphold me with Thy free spirit. Amen.*

Confession: The Apostles' Creed (TLH p.12)

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the Virgin Mary;
suffered under Pontius Pilate;
was crucified, died, and was buried;
He descended into hell;*

*the third day He rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of
God the Father almighty;
from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit;
the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

Prayer: Use a prayer book like *Luther's Prayers*

Note: You can also practice Ex Corde ("From the heart") prayers. Take prayer requests and pray about those things. It is important that children learn to pray from their parents, just as Jesus taught His disciples. Give them the opportunity to pray as well.

Prayer: The Lord's Prayer (TLH p.14)

*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.*

Hymn 644: Praise God from Whom all Blessing Flow

*Praise God from Whom all blessings flow.
Praise Him all creatures here below.
Praise Him above ye heavenly host.
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost! Amen.*

Setting 2 (With Older Children)

Opening Prayer: Luther's Evening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray You to forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Hymn: (TLH 120:5)

*Jesus, be with me and direct me;
Jesus, my plans and hopes inspire;
Jesus, from tempting thoughts protect me;
Jesus, be all my heart's Desire;
Jesus, be in my thoughts all day
Nor suffer me to fall away.*

Devotion: from One Hundred Bible Stories

Note: Children appreciate pictures. It helps them visualize what they are hearing. Use the pictures to explain the story. Ask questions along the way or use the questions at the end to make sure that they understand. It will also help them to remember! Review the previous story at the beginning of the devotion asking what they remember from the night before.

Hymn: (TLH 283)

*God's Word is our great heritage and shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age
Shall be our chief endeavor.
Through life it guides our way, In death it is our stay.
Lord, grant, while worlds endure,
We keep its teachings pure.
Throughout all generations.*

Confession: Luther's Explanation to the Second Article

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sin, from death and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood, and with His innocent suffering and death. He did this that I should be His very own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in eternal righteousness, innocence and joy; just as He is risen from death, lives and reigns in eternity. This is most certainly true.

Prayer: Use a prayer book like Teen Agers Pray

Note: Practice Ex Corde ("From the heart") prayers. Take prayer requests and pray about those things. Give children the opportunity to pray as well.

Prayer: The Lord's Prayer (sung to the tune of hymn 427)

Our Father in heaven all praise to Your name!
Your kingdom among us, Your will done the same
By mortals and angels. Come, Lord, reign alone;
Oh hear us and bless us from heaven's high throne.

The bread that we yearn for provide us each day;
As we forgive others, our sins take away;
In times of temptation, to lead us be near;
From evil deliver Your children most dear.

For Yours is the kingdom, o'er all things You reign.
And Yours is the power, all things You maintain.
To You be the glory, resounding again
From all of creation, forever! Amen.

Hymn 541:5: O Blessed Holy Trinity

Lord, bless and keep Thou me as Thine;
Lord, make Thy face upon me shine;
Lord, lift Thy countenance on me
And give me peace, sweet peace, from Thee. Amen.