

EARLY BAPTISTS EXPECTED DAILY FAMILY RELIGION

“Virginia Baptists in 1800 exemplified the Evangelical belief that family religion prepared children to become Christians.” So states historian Donald G. Mathews in his book *Religion in the Old South* (1977). To bolster this assertion, Mathews cites the minutes of the *Virginia Portsmouth Baptist Association* from May 24, 1800.

These “minutes” urge five daily activities in each home, as it was understood that church services were no substitute for a spiritual home. These Baptists understood the need for families governed by fathers and mothers concerned for their children’s spiritual life. The five activities included:

1. Daily Bible reading.
2. Daily exposition of this Bible reading, taking time to explain how the Bible applies to the “everyday” life of the family members.
3. Daily exhortation – practical application -- with all long-suffering and doctrine, that all those in the home would be “delivered from sin and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.”
4. Daily catechizing -- asking the children questions and listening to their answers – to reinforce the reading, exposition, and exhortation of the daily Bible reading.
5. Daily prayer.

May we consider the potential for fruitful Christianity when fervent “family religion” (often today referred to as “family altar” or “family devotions”) unites with the zealous teaching and preaching of God’s word at church services! Great opportunities are lost when “family religion” is neglected. Determine to practice “family religion” in your home daily.