

Worship the Lord

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*For where two or three are gathered together in my name,
I am there in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:20)*

Try to picture the Lord coming to visit your home. If you have this picture in mind, perhaps you can imagine the Lord inviting your family to come together for a time of worship. Just as the multitudes flocked to hear His wise and wonderful sayings, surely you and your loved ones would tremble with excitement, with Holy fear, and with love, to come before Him in worship. As He called you to prayer, to praise, and to hear His gentle words of instruction, you would feel your heart burning within you as His words unfolded the Divine truths that answer all the good desires of your heart.

Now imagine that this could happen whenever you wanted. All you will need is a very few things and a time when the two or three (or more) of you could gather for the Lord to “pay a visit.” When you stop to think about this, isn’t it an amazing idea? The practice of family worship can make these “visits” a reality. By worshipping the Lord regularly with your family the Lord’s presence can become a regular occurrence in your home.

Private and public worship are important for many reasons. Here are a few of the teachings the Lord has given that demonstrate the uses of worship.

- ❖ O come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand (Psalm 95:6,7).
- ❖ Take simply the Ten Commandments, the first of which is that you should worship the Lord God. Anyone who possesses the life of love or charity worships the Lord God, for it is in this that the life within him consists (*Arcana Coelestia* 1798).
- ❖ While a person is in the world, he ought certainly to participate in external worship as well; for it is by external worship that internal things are aroused, and by means of external worship external things are kept holy so as to enable internal things to flow in. Furthermore, a person is endowed with knowledge by this means, and is made ready to receive celestial things, and also has states of holiness conferred on him, though he is not conscious of this. These states of holiness are preserved by the Lord for His use in eternal life...(*Arcana Coelestia* 1618).

In many places in the Writings the Lord emphasizes that the most important goal of all worship involves living the life of charity. If we are living in accordance with the Lord’s Word, we are being regenerated by the Lord, and we are continually in internal worship whatever we happen to be doing with our bodies. The angels of heaven are said to experience a “perpetual Sabbath” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1618).

But the act of physically worshipping in our homes has a special effect on each person and on our families. It provides an external “state of holiness” that enables an internal holiness to flow into us. This brings with it a marvelous communication and spiritual bonding with the Lord and with those with whom we worship. The effects of these bonds may seem fairly small in the moment and may be very subtle, but their eternal consequences are immense.

Of course, the practice of worshipping with our families may take a bit of getting used to, especially if we have had little experience with it. The logistical matters may seem a little daunting. However, experience shows that the hardest part is getting started. It seems to work best when you begin in a small, manageable way until it becomes an accepted part of family life, just like saying a blessing at mealtime or having prayers at bedtime.

One minister recently observed that the young people he teaches today seem to yearn for the rituals he so fondly remembers from his childhood family worship. These include things that touched his senses; the warm glow of candles, the kind voices of parents leading in prayer, the odor of snuffed candle smoke. The ritual need not be complicated. Keeping a few key essentials of worship in mind will help you to realize how simple it can be.

Here is a suggested list of five steps that can guide you in making a home worship service meaningful, enjoyable and helpful to your family’s spiritual life. Apart from this list, there are countless other ways to bring a worshipful atmosphere to your home on a regular basis.

- 1. Create a sphere of reverence.** Quiet background music, lighted candles, *etc.* can help establish a special mood that prepares young and old to enter into a worshipful state. Distractions (like telephones and pets) can detract from this sphere.
- 2. Let the Lord be the leader.** Worship of the Lord requires that we humble ourselves before Him in prayer and adoration—not for His sake, but so that we are in a proper state to communicate with Him. Recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, as we kneel before the Word works well for this.
- 3. Read from the Word itself.** The actual passage can be very short, depending on the ages and attention spans of those at worship. Retelling the story in your own words and with demonstrable affection is a good way to capture the attention of the little ones. Involving the worshipers in the story can be done in many ways, if there is time. Pictures can also be a useful adjunct to the story. But do not hesitate to let the story stand by itself. Too much interpretation can cause it to lose its power.
- 4. Bring worship into life.** Sing a favorite worship song. Offer individual prayers. Share some personal thoughts or feelings that are related to the reading either during the service or immediately following.
- 5. Bring worship to a close.** Say a benediction (such as “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all, amen”). Then close the Word as a sign that our external “state of holiness” has ended. Other families close with a benediction and leave the Word open in a special place in the home as a reminder that the Lord is always with us in a more internal way.

Establishing a worship habit in our homes may take some time. Finding a time that works for all can be a trial. But if we succeed in putting the most important things first, the benefits of frequently turning our family's attention to the Lord in His Word will become crystal clear. For we will come to realize that it is the Lord who has built our home, and it is He who governs and guides us in all things therein. Through the "visits" of family worship, we will feel the Lord's presence with us ever more fully. What a marvelous blessing!