



Family Worship August 13, 2017

Preparation for Worship

Gather in a quiet place, free of distraction (put silenced cellphones in another room)

Decide who will lead the various parts. A family worship experience should involve everyone, *especially* children! This guide can be adapted by families of 1 or 2 people. Here are the parts:

- Reading the Call to Worship
- Reading the Scripture
- Reading the Pastor's Devotional and Our Offering to God sections
- Leading the Prayer (your own words, from notes)
- Playing the songs on a laptop, tablet, or phone (Just listen to the songs if you prefer not to sing☺) You can copy and paste the links or find them with Google.

Discuss who and what you should include in your prayer. In addition to people within the church family, also discuss friends, co-workers, and neighbors for whom you want to pray. Consider what local, national, or international concern you should include (Whoever is to lead the prayer can take notes—it's OK to look at notes when praying). A simple way to pray is to go by ACTS:

Adoration: giving God praise by naming God's beautiful qualities (Almighty, loving, etc.)

Confession: pausing for a minute for everyone to acknowledge their sin silently & privately

Thanksgiving: naming specific ways God has provided for needs or has answered prayers

Supplication: ask God to help or provide for specific people or situations

Suggested Order of Worship

Call to Worship Psalm 34:1-10
Song of Praise *Lord I Lift Your Name on High*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6l6orjM3NI>

Scripture Acts 26:9-18

Pastor's Devotional (on next page)

Our Offering to God

When we hear the word "offering," we naturally think of giving money to finance God's work. We also think of the time that we volunteer to bless other people. Yet our "offering" also includes how we choose to live as "sent people" in the places where we live, work, and play.

- What is something you learned from the devotional or your recent reading of Acts? If you are in a group, share this with the others.
- Have you ever had the opportunity to share the message of Jesus with anyone else? Did you feel vulnerable? Did you have any awareness of God's power at work thru you?
- Is there a person in your life who God is positioning you to share your faith?

Prayer (from your notes)

Song of Faith (optional) *Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound (My Chains Are Gone)*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoeBFZes3ts>

Pastor's Devotional Acts 26:9-18

Claiming his Roman citizenship rights not only protected Paul from the agony of being whipped when he was a prisoner. This past week we've been reading how claiming these rights positioned Paul to share the message of Jesus with powerful people. First, because the commander of the Roman fortress in Jerusalem arranged for it, Paul testified about the power of the crucified and risen Christ before Jewish Sanhedrin, the same ruling council which had condemned Jesus to death. After he was transferred to the prison in Caesarea (the Roman naval base), Paul presented the case for Christ to Governor Felix (the successor to Pontius Pilate). Felix allowed Paul to languish in prison. But when Felix was replaced, Paul had the opportunity to make the case for Christ to Festus, the next Roman governor.

After Festus decided to put Paul on trial in Jerusalem, Paul claimed his citizenship right to make his defense before one of Caesar's judges in Rome. Several days later, King Herod Agrippa II came to visit Governor Festus. This Jewish puppet-king was the great-grandson of Herod the Great (who attempted to kill Jesus when he was a baby). Curious to hear about this new religion, Agrippa and his sister Bernice joined Governor Festus in listening to Paul speak gracious truth to power.

Isn't it remarkable how God positioned Paul to tell the "high and mighty" about Jesus! Paul got these opportunities because of his willingness to suffer for Jesus' sake. He spoke gracious truth to power while in chains!

Once again, Paul's told his story. In his zeal to defend his Jewish beliefs, he had persecuted Christians, till Jesus confronted him with a blinding light. He heard Jesus tell of appointing Paul—the most unlikely person—to be "a servant and a witness" of the living Lord's life-giving power. Promising "rescue," Jesus sent Paul to bring Jews and Gentiles to God:

I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan to God, so they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

God gave this most unlikely apostle the opportunity to share Jesus with the hardest-to-reach sinners. Do a Google search on Felix, Festus, Herod Agrippa, and Bernice, and you will read of treachery, cruelty, murder, and incest—Game of Thrones stuff! (not that I watch it:-) Yet these wicked, powerful people were intrigued and affected by Paul's message. In 24:25 we are told that "as Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said `that's enough for now.'" In 26:28 King Herod Agrippa declared to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

As far as we know, none of these rulers became Christians. It's rare for powerful people to have the humility to recognize their sin and accept God's grace. Yet in these stories we glimpse how incredibly compelling the Gospel was to pagan idol worshippers, even the powerful ones.

The Gospel of Jesus is still intriguing and compelling. If we embody him as a church that isn't judgmental, institutional, or self-centered, Jesus will be incredibly attractive to sinners—even those who seem pagan-beyond-reach. If we refuse to "water down" the good news, the message of atonement for sin will break thru hard hearts. If we tell our own stories, our testimony will break open closed minds—especially when share how Jesus sustained us through suffering.

Building relationships with neighbors gives us the opportunity to share Jesus. Not everyone will believe. Some will—perhaps to our surprise! And as we stretch ourselves, we will find that like Paul, we can say, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).