

COME, LET US ADORE HIM IN OUR HOMES

Sunday evenings were special growing up. We would spread a blanket on the living room floor and drink hot chocolate with marshmallows while watching *The Wonderful World of Disney*. Then, before going to bed, we sang *Blessed Be The Tie That Binds*.

That's the extent of our worshipping together at home. I am not criticizing my parents; they were wonderful, but worshipping at home wasn't really taught. We worshipped at church lead by the pastor. Even if my parents were encouraged to lead worship at home, I speculate they would have felt intimidated and ill equipped.

Strange as it may sound, I am not totally comfortable leading worship in my own home. Quite honestly, I'm anxious about negative reactions from family members and I am uncomfortable with the emotional intimacy involved in family worship. I don't mean to throw my family under the bus; the problem is much more with me. But having confessed this, I am committed to leading worship on Christmas Day in my home.

Steve's sermon last week on the priesthood of every believer reinforced my decision to lead in worship next Sunday, Christmas Day. Steve pointed out that there is no formal priesthood in the New Testament Church because every one of us is a priest under the New Covenant. The Apostle Peter revealed this revolutionary truth to Jews scattered throughout the Roman Empire who had been raised under the Old Covenant priesthood.

¹ Peter 2:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ But you are a chosen race, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

As a priest you are qualified and privileged to offer worship to God. Only priests could offer sacrifices under the Old Covenant. As priests under the New Covenant we offer the sacrifices of praise and service. The Preacher of Hebrews calls us to continually offer up these sacrifices.

Hebrews 13:15-16 (ESV)

¹⁵ Through him then let us continually **offer up a sacrifice of praise** to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. ¹⁶ Do not neglect to **do good and to share** what you have, for **such sacrifices** are pleasing to God.

You are not only a priest, but you are also gifted to serve and Jesus has given people like me to equip you for the work of the ministry.

Ephesians 4:1-16 (ESV)

¹ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ But **grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift**. ⁸ Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." ⁹ (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, **the shepherds and teachers**, ¹² **to equip the saints for the work of ministry**, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every

joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

As one of your *shepherd-teachers* it's my joy to equip you to *practice your priesthood* by encouraging you to lead worship in your home this Christmas season.

The Christmas Story and Christmas Hymns are resources; you are certainly not limited to these. If you choose to use them, there are extras for your family and guests. Please help yourself after service.

I want to give you three coaching tips related to leading worship in your home this Christmas. I encourage you to **plan, prepare** and **pray**.

PLAN

We need to give thought to the practicals of leading a time of worship such as the *when* and *where*.

The traditional flow of our Christmas day is stockings, breakfast, gifts, cleanup and hangout, dinner. Last year it worked well to have our worship time after breakfast before we opened gifts. Cathy and I talked about this before hand so we were tracking. Everyone had a copy of the *The Christmas Story* and we simply went round the circle reading the story. The story inspired questions and discussion and we concluded our worship in prayer. This lead very naturally into opening gifts.

A time of worship could also be integrated into a meal time.

If you're married, make sure to coordinate your plans with your spouse.

Give thought to the seating, lighting and any materials you need to provide.

Having planned for the practicals we need to *prepare*.

PREPARE

Here we are thinking about the *what* and *how* of our worship time.

You might have a great devotional you'd like to share. You might want to read and reflect on a short passage of Scripture and lead in prayer.

As a general principle, if possible, the more people you involve, the better. As an example, giving everyone a copy of *The Christmas Story* and having everyone who wants to, read a portion of the story. At appropriate points you could insert a song to be sung. Some children really enjoy reading out loud and this should be encouraged and celebrated as part of your worship experience.

Depending on the personality of your group, you might enjoy doing a "dramatic" reading by assigning certain ones to be Zechariah, Gabriel, Elizabeth, Mary etc. You or someone you assign can be the narrator. Again, at appropriate points in the story you could have someone ready to lead the group in singing.

If you have a really lively group or a number of children, you could act out a scene or two of the story. The shepherds and the angels would be a great one followed by the shepherds coming to the manger. You could incorporate *Angels We Have Heard On High* and *Away In A Manger*.

Cathy and I have decided to do what we did with our Home Group this year: invite those at our worship time to share their favorite stories from the life of Jesus.

The point is that we need to prepare what we're going to do during our worship time and how we're going to do it. We certainly need to take into account the people with us and the overall personality of the group.

In addition to planning and preparing we need to be praying.

PRAY

Pray for guidance in preparing.

Pray the Holy Spirit speak to each person joining in worship.

Pray with thanksgiving that Jesus has made you a priest fully equipped to lead in worship.

Not all of us will be in a situation where we can lead in worship; we may be guests in others' homes. Others of us may be alone on Christmas Day or it may be us and our spouse or us and our parent. Whatever our circumstance this Christmas, let us, as priests of the Most High, make every effort to give time and place to worship God the Father, Who sent the Son, Jesus, the Son Who humbled Himself and took on humanity and the Holy Spirit Who conceived the infant Jesus in Mary's womb.

May your Christmas celebration be rich with love, joy and peace in Christ.