



## Family Worship September 24, 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

<b>Call to Worship</b>	Psalm 34:1-3
<b>Song of Praise</b>	<i>Amazing Grace</i>
<b>Scripture</b>	1 John 2:18-23
<b>Pastor's Devotional</b>	(Next page—remember that the "G" of "Gnosticism" is silent)

### 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.

- Which of the current "antichrists" listed in the devotional have persuaded the most people who were raised in the Christian faith to "go out from us"?
- Are there particular books or false teachers who currently seem to be a significant threat to the faith of young adults as well as people of your own generation?
- How do we prepare new believers to understand and remain faithful to the essentials of the Gospel?

**Prayer** (from your notes)

**Song of Faith**      *Lord I Lift Your Name on High*

## Pastor's Devotional

How about a one-page devotional on “the antichrist”? I'm up for it!

Previously, John warned fellow disciples not to “love the world” (consumed by the lusts of the “fallen world”). Continuing a somber tone, the aging apostle reminded his “dear children” that “this is the last hour.” The first century church expected Jesus to return to earth soon after his resurrection, especially since the growth of the church had brought persecution.

They had heard “that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come.” Many books and movies speculate on the meaning of “antichrist.” Instead of indulging our imaginations, let's listen to what scripture says. John acknowledged that a single antichrist was coming as he referred to multiple antichrists in his time (about 90 AD). While it's tempting to speculate on the antichrist's identity, John's concern was the false teachers dividing the 1<sup>st</sup> century church. By 90 AD the Christian movement had already been set back by leaders who abandoned the Gospel by denying that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah and the incarnate Son of God. As verse 24 says: “Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is that antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son.”

Rather than end-of-the-world speculation, John's main intent is to prepare his “children” for dealing with false teachers. He refers to those who “went out from us.” False shepherds had decimated the flock by convincing gullible Christians to disregard what the apostles taught. Because Gentile Christians had been influenced by the pagan philosophy of Gnosticism prior to their baptism, they were easily persuaded to believe distorted claims about Jesus. Gnostic teachers taught that Jesus wasn't human (To them, any flesh—by definition—was evil). Gnostics denied that Jesus suffered on a cross. In their anti-semitism, they denied that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. Instead, Gnostic Christians revered Jesus as a divinely-sent guru.

These departures from core Gospel message prompted John to call the false shepherds “anti-christs.” In the remainder of this section, he reassured the disciples that “they have an anointing from the Holy One” which will “remain” as the true Gospel “remains” in them.

In our time, we also deal with antichrists:

1. Jehovah Witnesses deny the Trinity and the deity of Christ.
2. Many New Age teachers have “resurrected” Gnosticism, viewing Jesus as guru who teaches wisdom to help people experience fulfillment and wholeness (while denying that his death on the cross has significance).
3. Skeptics (including atheists & agnostics) say Jesus was merely an inspiring teacher.
4. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc., attribute unique qualities to Jesus while they deny his divine Sonship.
5. Jews who do not accept the claim that the Messiah suffered and died in shame

To believe in the Gospel means that Christ-followers disagree with antichrists over the most important truth-claim ever made. To be faithful and missional, we cannot depart from the core essentials of our faith. Otherwise we wouldn't have good news to share. But as Christ-followers, we are called to love antichrists! Often that's not hard—many are delightful people.

Among the antichrists who have left the church are family members, friends, neighbors, and work colleagues. Being aggressive, fearful or resentful will never persuade them. It's our calm confidence in the life-changing power of Jesus that will give them notice, especially if they see this power at work in us, and hear our respectful testimony about Jesus. As Peter wrote:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander  
(1 Peter 3:15-16)