

AN EVERYDAY ORDINARY LITURGY

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An Everyday, Ordinary Liturgy

Liturgy forms and shapes us. There is a Latin phrase, *lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi* that is often translated “as we worship, so we believe, so we live.” The prayers we pray, the songs we sing, and the activities and actions of worship—they shape us and form us in conscious and subconscious ways.

Liturgy occurs both inside the walls of the church during corporate worship and outside the walls of the church in our everyday, ordinary lives. C. S. Lewis wrote about the power of liturgy to turn our attention to God (and isn’t that essential to worship?):

And it enables us to do these things best—if you like, it “works” best—when, through long familiarity, we don’t have to think about it. As long as you notice, and have to count the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance. A good shoe is a shoe you don’t notice. Good reading becomes possible when you need not consciously think about eyes, or light, or print, or spelling. The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God.¹

I have taken six common elements of corporate worship, reframed them, and shared some ideas that help me take my worship beyond the walls of the sanctuary and into the world. Try these practices on for size. Feel free to edit and adapt them as you see fit, or set them aside completely and try something different. Whatever you do, ask the Spirit of God today to help you do the work of worship in the places you live, learn, work, serve, and play.

The Call to Worship

Worship gatherings typically begin with a call to worship. It may be a song, a Scripture reading, or a prayer. Some churches use bells, chimes, or some other instrumental sound. Whatever the form, the call to worship serves as a signal, a reminder, and a focal point alerting the gathered that the activity of worship is set to begin.

I like what Chris Gambill says:

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (Harcourt Books: San Diego, 2002), 4.

*The call to worship is a tool to remind us about God. About who He is. About His unchanging character. About His love, grace, faithfulness, majesty, and might. It reminds us that we only come into God's presence because He has invited us through the blood of Jesus Christ. And in that invitation, because of who God is, we are invited to worship Him as His people.*²

What wakes you up in the morning? An alarm clock? Your phone? Birds sweetly singing or children noisily preparing for school? Whatever your wake-up call may be, welcome it and allow it to become a prompt for worship. As your eyes open and you become aware of the breath filling your lungs, let your first thoughts be directed toward God.

Commit your day to the Lord, consecrate yourself afresh, and through Christ, offer your everyday, ordinary life as an act of worship.

An Affirmation of Faith

In corporate worship, the people of God affirm their faith by declaring an historic confession of the Christian faith like the Apostles Creed or Nicene Creed or through the proclamation of a more contemporary expression of faith. These affirmations connect us with the one, holy, catholic church; and as we declare them, we give testimony to what we know and believe to be true, right, and good.

In Philippians 4, the Apostle Paul writes: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8).

Today in your everyday, ordinary life, find opportunities to not only think about the kinds of things Paul mentions in Philippians 4, but affirm them as well. Whenever you see something good, true, or beautiful, take note of it. Ponder it, reflect upon it. And affirm it.

Build the language of affirmation into your life. Point out the good, true, and beautiful things wherever you find them. Learn to declare: “That’s true, that’s noble, that’s right, pure, lovely, and admirable ... I affirm it.”

A Prayer of Confession

Prayers of confession are opportunities to come clean before God, to open up our lives to the One who already knows us inside and out. The word confession means to “agree with.” When the people of God confess their sins, they are, in a sense, coming into agreement with God about their state of sinfulness.

John Ortberg says that a sinner’s favorite prayer is “Lord, don’t watch me now.”

There is a rich tradition of prayers of confession in the Scriptures. Perhaps the best example is found in the prayer of David as recorded in Psalm 51: “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so

² Chris Gambill, “How the Call to Worship Fosters God-Focused Worship,” *Journey of Worship*, (blog), <http://www.journeyofworship.com/2012/how-the-call-to-worship-fosters-god-focused-worship/>.

you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:1–3).

The Anglican tradition includes this prayer of confession in its *Book of Common Prayer*:

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Take a few moments to scan the headlines. More often than not, they are dominated by bad news rather than good news.

Instead of being quick to judge others, take an opportunity to examine your own heart. The truth is, the bad news is not only out there; it’s inside each of us and all of us. As God reveals the sinfulness of your heart, use this ancient prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.”

As your day comes to a close, take a few moments to scroll through your day. In what ways have you failed to love God with your whole heart? In what ways have you failed to love your neighbor, your spouse, your co-workers, and others as yourself?

Examine your heart with the words from Psalm 139:23–24: “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

The Passing of the Peace

The passing of the peace is a tradition that has deep roots in Scripture. After his resurrection, Jesus greeted his disciples with the words, “Peace be with you” (John 20:19). The Apostle Paul typically began his letters with the greeting, “Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The passing of the peace embodies our identity as children of God and also our call from Jesus to be peacemakers. As well, this piece of the liturgy conditions and trains our hearts, hands, and tongues in the ways of peace.

In more formal settings, the people of God rise from their seats and pronounce these words to their fellow worshippers: “The peace of Christ be with you. And also with you.” In less formal settings, people will greet one another with high fives, hugs, and perhaps even a holy kiss.

As you walk through your office, school, or neighborhood, lift up your head, and be proactive to make eye contact with people, greeting them by name. And while saying, “The peace of Christ be with you” may not be appropriate in every setting, a simple “Peace be with you” might brighten someone’s day or open up an opportunity for further conversation.

Offering

“The Christian life is marked by the offering of one’s self to God to be shaped, empowered, directed, and changed by God. In worship, God presents us with the costly self-offering of Jesus Christ. We are claimed by Christ and set free. In response to God’s love in Jesus Christ, we offer God our lives, our gifts, our abilities, and our material goods, for God’s service.” (*The Book of Common Worship*)

Earlier in the book, I introduced you to one of my favorite Hebrew words, *avodah*. In some places *avodah* is translated “work”; in other places it is translated as “worship,” and still other times as “serve.”

David Miller, in his introduction to Dorothy Sayer’s essay “Why Work,” writes, “This rich, biblical, and integrated concept of *avodah* provides the understanding of work through which we both worship God and serve neighbor.”

I love the way Eugene Peterson captures the words of the Apostle Paul in his letter to the church in Rome: “So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering” (Romans 12:1, *The Message*).

Workers, what would it look like for you to place your work before God as an offering? Here are a few ideas:

- What tools do you use in your work? As you begin your workday, physically lift them up and consecrate them in worship to God and service to others.
- Before you present a completed project to a supervisor or client, offer the work of your hands to God, and ask God to use your work to promote the common good and flourishing of others.
- In what ways can you open up space in your workplace for others to engage in meaningful work?

Parents, what would it look like for you to place your parenting before God as an offering? Here are a few ideas:

- Ponder and reflect on your child’s uniqueness. How has God fearfully created your child? Allow those insights to stir up a sense of wonder within you, and thank the One who created your child and entrusted his or her care to you.
- Take a walk with your child, keeping in mind the words of Deuteronomy 6:6–7: “These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” How can your walk become a time of guidance and teaching?

Students, what would it look like for you to place your study before God as an offering? Here are a few ideas:

- Begin your studies by offering a prayer of gratitude, thanking God for the opportunity to learn and expand your knowledge base.

- Reflect on the activity of God in each discipline of study. Ask God to show you his fingerprints throughout your field.

In light of Colossians 3:23, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,” offer your best to God.

Benediction

The word benediction is derived from the Latin (*bene*, well + *dicere*, to speak), and its literal meaning is to speak a good word. Benedictions are typically pronounced at the end of a worship gathering. The pastor or worship leader may lift up his or her hands and speak a word of blessing over the people. (If this is the practice in your faith community, may I suggest that the next time the benediction is spoken, instead of closing your eyes and bowing your head, lift up your head and make eye contact with the One who blesses you).

Here are two of the most well-known Scriptural benedictions:

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24–26)

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:14)

Throughout the day, look for opportunities to bless people by pronouncing a benediction upon them. Leverage technology to speak a good word into someone’s life:

- Send a text message
- Post something to someone’s Facebook wall
- Send a direct message via Twitter
- Or go old school and make a phone call

Do you know the names of the people who serve you throughout your day and week? For instance:

- The baristas at the local coffee shop
- Your postal carrier or delivery person
- The checkout person in the grocery store
- The crossing guard

Learn their names and then find ways to thank them. Make sure they know that you appreciate the work they do and the way they serve. Bless them!

My hope for this appendix is to help you make a connection between your Sunday worship and your everyday, ordinary life. I believe God’s goal is that we would live integrated lives and that our worship would extend beyond the walls of the sanctuary into the places we live, learn, work, serve, and play.

What practices have you found helpful? How have you integrated these rituals into your daily routines and rhythms? What other ways have you connected your Sunday liturgy with your

worship throughout the week? I would love to hear from you, and I value your feedback and input. You can email me at terry@terrytimm.com.

About the author:

Terry Timm serves as the lead pastor of Christ Community Church of the South Hills, a missional community of faith located in Pittsburgh, PA. His background in the fields of music, education, theology, and leadership fuels his passion of helping people become everything God intended, created, redeemed and gifted them to be.

If you found this *Everyday, Ordinary Liturgy* eBook helpful, you will enjoy Terry's book, *A Movable Feast*. Available for purchase from [Hearts & Minds Bookstore](#) as well as on [Amazon](#), [B&N](#), or as an [eBook](#).

A Movable Feast

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