

DAWN TREADER

EQUIPPING FAMILIES FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

A KEEPING THE FAITH RESOURCE

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Aslan Academy



This month's issue of the *Dawn Treader* discusses worship and how to make it a functional part of your family's life and discipleship. Spiritual disciplines, closely connected to worship, are also highlighted.

Dawn Treader Moments

FOCUS OF THE MONTH: WORSHIP

Dawn Treader Moments are purpose-driven opportunities to engage children in important topics. We offer one key question per week, the answers to which parents can then explore with their children throughout the week.

What Does It Mean to Worship God?

How do we worship God, "in spirit and in Truth" (John 4:24), as Jesus commands us? Teaching our children about worship requires spiritual discipline and growth in spiritual understanding of the meaning of worship, both for the parents and for the children. So discussing worship together as a family, and making particular plans for family worship, is an extremely important discipleship activity, and the one which we shall be focusing on this month. For week one, ask the first question over an unhurried meal. Let the children think about it and then offer their own answers. The children should talk more than the parents. Throughout the week, offer the different answers highlighted and let the children discuss them. (Parents, read through the relevant Bible passages in advance). Challenge the children to look up other verses addressing the question. Do the same for the following questions each week for the month.

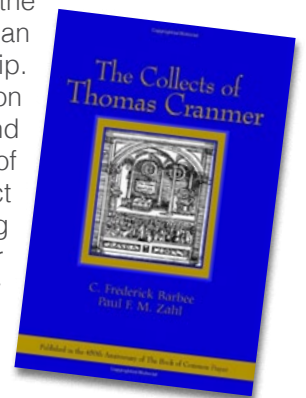


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Resource of the Month

The Collects of Thomas Cranmer
– C. Frederick Barbee and Paul F. M. Zahle

This slim volume is a marvelous introduction to the history of Christian worship throughout the ages, offering an entire year's worth of prayers for the use of the whole church. While some of the collects were written by the Reformer Thomas Cranmer himself, most are English translations of prayers that date back to the early centuries of the church or other significant periods in the development of Christian traditions in worship. The authors' notes on the history behind and spiritual application of each individual collect are very helpful in giving direction and deeper understanding for one's own worship and growth in relationship with God. This book is a splendid foundation for starting regular family worship in your own home.



Dawn Treader Moments

FOCUS OF THE MONTH: WORSHIP (CONT'D)

Week One: What does worship mean? (Psalms 92, 96, and 100)
Worship means respectful devotion—loving, honoring, and obeying someone who deserves our highest regard.
Worshipping God means acknowledging and celebrating His power and perfection in gratitude.
Worship includes understanding and awe of God's Holiness; we remember how great He is and behave reverently in His Presence.

Week Two: How does worship fit into our relationship with God? (Exodus 20:2-6, John 9:31, 1 Corinthians 14:22-25)
Worship places us in a right relationship with God—when we worship Him, we actively recognize Him as our Creator, Savior, and King.
Worship is how we tell God that we love Him.
Worship is our “reasonable service” (Romans 12:1) of gratitude for all God has done for us.
Worship is a way to spread the Gospel message to non-believers; when others see us worshipping God, they will realize that there is Someone Who deserves our worship, and may want to learn more about Him.

Week Three: How do we worship God? (Psalms 95 and 122:1, John 4:21-24)
By thanking Him in prayer and song and through attending church.
By remembering and discussing the great things He has done—Jesus left us the memorial of His death and resurrection in the Lord's Supper, which is a very special form of worship.
By celebrating His gift of salvation and other blessings in this life—in church, during religious holidays such as Christmas and Easter and Thanksgiving, and rejoicing in God's love all the time.
Worship demonstrates both our closeness to God and our respect for God—when we pray or attend worship services, it is a time

to “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). But at the same time, God expects us to enjoy the time we spend with Him—He enjoys spending time with us!

Week Four: What are spiritual disciplines, and how do they connect with worship? (1 Corinthians 9:23-27 and 12:1-13, Ephesians 6:11-19)
Spiritual disciplines are active ways in which we try to live God's way, demonstrating how much we appreciate His salvation and want to be more like Jesus, which is the best way to honor Him.
When we are spiritually disciplined, we are allowing God to control our fallen human instincts with His Own perfect wisdom, which helps us to see more clearly what He is like and have a closer relationship with Him.
Worship is a spiritual discipline, and most other spiritual disciplines have a worship element to them—praying, obeying, serving, and trusting in God's guidance are all ways of telling God how much we love and respect Him, and want to do His Will.
When we love and honor someone, we naturally want to show it in our words and actions. Reciprocally, we will find ourselves loving and trusting God even more as we do things that express our devotion in concrete acts of worship through spiritual disciplines.¹

¹ For more information on spiritual disciplines, see the “Introducing Spiritual Disciplines to Your Children” article (pg. 145) in Theme 7 of *Keeping the Faith* guidebook.

Theologian Theodore

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: IF I'M ALREADY SAVED, WHY DO I HAVE TO TRY SO HARD TO BE GOOD?

Theodore: Hello, Salvador, how's it going?

Salvador: Okay, I guess.

Theo: Only guess?

Salv: Well, I've been having some personal struggles; I don't want to bother you with them . . .

Theo: Come on; you know I'd want to help you out. I'm your friend, aren't I?

Salv: My best friend. If it hadn't been for you, I never would have become a believer in Jesus. But I'm not sure I'm a very good one. That's what's been bothering me. Why do I have to be good to be accepted as a believer? I thought salvation was about faith, not about works.

Theo: And you're absolutely right about that, Salvador. Nobody could ever be saved on the basis of the good things they've done: none of us are capable of the kind of holy goodness that could bring us back into a relationship with God and sharing His kind of life; only Jesus' sacrifice and free gift could do that. Faith is believing and accepting that free gift. However, it is true that good works *follow* from salvation, even though they cannot earn it.

Salv: But I don't get it. If they're not necessary . . .

Theo: You can't exactly say that. It doesn't make sense. That would be like saying that a flashlight battery isn't necessary because it was included in the package. Our ability to do good works through Christ is included in His "salvation package": we get eternal life *and* a better life here and now on earth. You can't have one without the other.

Salv: Why not?

Theo: Salvation isn't just about all the bad things we've done being forgiven and forgotten. It's about making us into the kind of people God created us to be. The first step in that process—and an absolutely necessary step—is to come to Him in faith through Jesus Christ. Until we do that, God cannot do anything with us. As C.S. Lewis put it, "He cannot, so to speak, put out His own hand and pull [us] into the right position, for then it would not be free will any more"¹. But once we give ourselves up to Him, He can start working. Then we have, in a sense, "entered into partnership"—what the Bible would call a covenant relationship—with God, and we no longer can say "it's my life; I'll do what I want with it." In accepting Christ's salvation, we surrender our lives to Him, just as He gave His for us on the Cross. And so we now have a responsibility to make our lives pleasing to Him.

Salv: But why, if this change in our way of living is part of our salvation, is it not instantaneous, like the rest of it? Why is it still so hard for me to be good and behave in a Christlike manner even after I have given up my life to Him and been taken as His own?

Theo: Well, Salvador, I think part of the answer is in that word you used: "living." The only way for us to possess the Christlike life that God wants us to have in Him is for us to "live it out." And that can't be done in an instant. We must take the time to act



Theologian Theodore (CONT'D)

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: IF I'M ALREADY SAVED, WHY DO I HAVE TO TRY SO HARD TO BE GOOD?

in accordance with our new life in Christ in order to be able to really say that we have the new life. It would be quite ridiculous to say that you had a new life and not live in that way; a life is not a life unless it is lived. This takes work. Of course, God makes the work much easier for us; in a sense, He does the work for us. When we talk about “being good” as part of our life of discipleship, we are now trying to understand, as C.S. Lewis put it, “God and man working together. And, of course, we begin by thinking it is like two men working together, so that you could say ‘He did this bit and I did that.’ But... God is not like that. He is inside you as well as outside.”²

Salv: Then why don't I feel any different?

Theo: Living isn't so much about how we feel, as about how we act. C.S. Lewis said, “Do not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor; act as if you did... When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.”³ This is what spiritual disciplines are all about: praying, serving, worshipping, and all the rest of the “good works” we do act on the new life inside of us, so that we can truly begin to see and feel it in ourselves. And there's another part about doing good, as a disciple of Jesus, which deals not so much with our own salvation as with that of others. When we let God begin to renew our lives in accordance with His Own Holiness, then we can show others a little bit of what His Holiness is like. Then people may come to want to have a relationship with the One Who is absolutely perfect in His goodness and love, when they see how nice it is to have a friend who is merely following his Teacher's example in being good and loving.

Salv: Yes, I see what you mean. I know that that was part of why you were able to influence me to accept Christ as my Savior, because I saw what a difference it made in your life and our friendship.

Theo: And the final, and really the most important, reason that we are to discipline ourselves to live righteously as followers of Jesus, is because our salvation is a relationship. If we truly love and honor the Savior who died for us, how could we bear to give Him anything less than the best work we can do? The Bible tells us to “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psalm 96:9); because He is holy, and has given us the opportunity to share in His holy life. To not even try to be holy in His Presence would be ungrateful indeed, especially since He is the One Who gives us the ability to live that new, holy life in Him. That is the fullness of His Salvation.

Ask your children: What do you think about Theo's answers to Salvador's questions? Do you have any other questions of your own that this dialogue has brought up for you? Challenge them to think up more responses they could give, if someone asked them a question like Salvador's.

Notes:

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 50th Anniversary ed. (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2002), p. 212.

² *Ibid.*, p. 149.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Monthly Prayer

PRAISE THE LORD

Our prayer for this month is one of praise—a prayer that children can use to worship God for His greatness. Sometimes we don't need to be asking for things when we pray; we just need to recognize God for Who He is, in all His majesty and loving-kindness. The prayer which follows is the words to a hymn by Fanny J. Crosby—so kids can sing their prayers if they want to!



Monthly Prayer (CONT'D)

PRAISE THE LORD

To God be the glory—
Great things He has done!
So loved He the world that
He gave us His Son.

Praise the Lord,
Praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord,
Praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice!

O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory—
Great things He has done!



Activity for the Month

WORSHIP IN THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

It is a wonderful thing to have a special place to worship in. In Exodus 25-31 and 34-39, and in 1 Kings 5-8, the building, design, and worship structure of first the Tabernacle and then the Temple of Israel are described in minute detail. Choose a particular spot in your house to hold regular family worship, and decorate it together with your children. Encourage them to use the colors red (Christ's sacrifice), white (God's righteousness), gold (God's glory), and royal purple (for God's Kingdom), and Christian symbols such as the Cross, the Lion and the Lamb, the fish (in Greek, the word for fish is an acronym for "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior," as well as referencing the call to be "fishers of men" in Matthew 4:19), and the lily (which represents new life and the Resurrection, as well as having been used in Solomon's Temple). Your children may find other colors and decorations that have Scriptural connections as well. Discuss what these symbols mean in our faith, and use them to make your place of worship beautiful and spiritually meaningful.

