

Preparing



for
Service



Preparing For Service

Lance Stallcop

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Larry Anders, Brian Burns, Amy Berry, and Michael Conley for their corrections, comments, and editing.
Thanks to Mike Dardeen for the cover art.

All scripture are taken from the New King James Version
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

© Lance Stallcop, 2020

This document may be copied and distributed verbatim. Changes not permitted without permission.

Preparing For Service

Maybe you would like to be more involved in the worship but you're worried about saying or doing the wrong thing. This is common. We're all nervous and apprehensive the first time we try something new. Carrying out the various tasks of our worship service isn't hard, but it requires thought and planning. The key to your success is preparation. Here we will discuss how to accomplish each part of the service and ways to prepare yourself to participate.

Intent Of This Book

Before we begin, understand that the intention of this book is to provide you with a way to conduct the worship services scripturally, not the way. You will often be directed to discuss a matter with the leadership at your local congregation or seek their help. Other times you'll be told to pay attention to how others perform their duties. Your responsibility is to God, your leadership, and the other members. As you learn to participate in the services make sure you are conducting yourself scripturally and according to the customs of your home congregation.

Order

The Bible tells us "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33). When you lead any part of the service your job is to provide an orderly, easy to understand environment for worshippers. Our worship is simple and easy to carry out. It has none of the complicated and laborious tasks of the Jewish system of feasts and sacrifices, and for this we should be thankful. We don't need a system of trained priests. We have a simple design, easily understood by fishermen, shepherds, and carpenters.

Let this be a guiding principle. Don't be tempted to try something new or novel. If you start to think the worship has grown stale and needs spicing up, the problem is you, not the worship. It's probably time for your teachers to take their job more seriously and study more. Maybe you need to hold a singing school. The song leaders might need to practice more and be more thoughtful in their song selection. Maybe the problem with your worship is a lack of preparation or a poor attitude. If you're going to change the worship make sure you have a good reason and congregational support. This is not the way to fix a personal problem.

Tradition

When we read about tradition in the New Testament it's usually in a negative context, Jesus criticizing the Jews for preferring their traditions over the commandments of God. We should heed His warnings.

But not all tradition is bad. In fact tradition helps us get through the day. In this case we think of tradition as our customs or habits. They bring order to our lives and in the context of the church, bring order to our services.

What would happen if the service was different every Sunday? One Sunday the collection is first, the next week it's the teaching, the next Sunday we start with the communion. We would have chaos and confusion. Hence we need tradition in our services. When the congregation meets the regular members should know what to expect.

If someone asked you to write down the order of the service at your place of worship could you do it? Could you arrange men to cover all the duties of the service without asking someone else if you had everything covered? You may have sat through it for years and not

given it much thought until it comes time to organize it yourself. Make sure you pay attention so you know.

Having order and consistency is especially important for the Sunday morning service. You might be more flexible with evening or midweek services. There might be an occasional service with 5 minute lessons by a number of speakers, or some other variation. These should still be conducted in an order that's easy to follow without being distracting to those in attendance.

Be familiar with the traditions of the congregation. If you pay attention to how the service is normally conducted, watch what happens, how things are done, and listen to what is said, you'll equip yourself nicely to begin participating in the worship.

General Thoughts

When you speak publicly, teach, lead a prayer, or make a few remarks before the communion, remember your objective is to communicate with others. You don't need to sound poetic. You're not from the 1600's, so unless you're reading from the King James, 'thee' and 'thou' aren't necessary. Speak as you would normally speak.

You will very likely be nervous when you start participating in the services, and you will tend to speak faster than normal. You may even mumble. Your anxiety is telling you to get it over with as quickly as you can. So before you start anything, remind yourself to take a breath, slow down, speak up, and speak clearly.

Pay attention to how others perform their duties. It's easy to sit through a service and let things happen around you without giving much thought to how they happen. If you're asked to pass the collection basket do you know which side of the building to start on? You can start on the other side if you want but don't be

surprised if some people aren't ready, because you're breaking their routine. Are there any older members who need extra help when they are served the cup? Watch and listen to what others do and say.

Remember we gather to worship the almighty God of Heaven. When you sing it is to praise Him. We pray to thank Him and ask His blessings. We teach to encourage and educate others in the truth of the gospel. We give to support the work of the church. We commune to remember His great sacrifice. It is an honor to be allowed to worship Him, we should not take it lightly or irreverently.

Assumptions, What This Book Is Not

We will not be studying all the reasons why we worship as we do in these pages. Our objective is to help with the mechanics of accomplishing these tasks.

As a participant in the worship you need to put in the time and study to understand each part of the worship. Learn why we use one loaf and one cup, why we sing without instruments, etc. If you have questions, arrange a time to study with one of the leaders in your congregation. If you want to be a teacher someday the items of worship are a good place to start. Begin now putting together a lesson on each.

Passing The Collection

In most cases this is the first thing a young man will do when he begins to participate in the service. Often the collection is taken without any words spoken, and that's fine if everyone knows what is happening. If you want to say something you could quote a passage:

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

1 Corinthians 16:2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

Either of these is fine, and if you've never spoken publicly this can be good practice. If you don't want to read a passage but still want to say something you could try:

"At this time we will take up the collection to support the work of the church."

If you're nervous, remember to slow down and take your time. Speak up so people can hear you. You're not in a hurry and you'll be less likely to make a mistake.

Leading A Song

Not everyone is a song leader, but more could learn than probably do. This is a part of the worship that requires a good deal of practice. You don't have to think much about how to pass the collection basket, but leading a song and doing a good job requires effort.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

The church is full of song starters, but woefully short on song leaders. You might think learning to sing is too hard, or you don't have the talent. Maybe you think you're tone deaf. Mostly this is

an excuse. Very few people are truly tone deaf. Mostly people are unpracticed. Even more don't bother trying.

We won't be learning here how to lead a song, but there are ways to learn to be a competent song leader.

1. Sing with the other song leaders. If you normally sing a different part, start regularly singing the lead. This will help you learn a few songs you can later lead yourself.
2. Learn your do-re-mi's. There are only 7 shape notes, learn them.
3. Think about attending a singing school. The National School of Music is good.
4. Host a singing school.
5. Listen to gospel music, and pay attention to it. Listen to the different parts carefully. Sing along.
6. Practice, practice, practice.
7. Work on pitch and timing. Make your songs easy to sing.
8. Ask for help. You probably know someone who understands a little bit of music and does a good job leading a song. Sing along with that person. They don't need to be an expert to get you started.
9. Practice more.
10. Pick out a couple of songs you know well and learn to lead them.

Once you become a competent song leader, do the congregation a favor and learn a couple of new songs. Encourage other song leaders to do the same. This is a good area to go the extra mile. Everyone's singing needs improvement. Arrange a singing practice some evening. Get people together and learn new songs. Practice other songs that don't always sound very good. If you want to make your worship better, good singing is a great place to start.

Choose appropriate songs. "Oh Why Not Tonight" is a great invitation song, but probably not for a Sunday morning. The

Sunday morning worship is a time of remembrance and reverence, so select songs that are appropriate. If you have a new song, save it for the evening or mid-week service. Sunday morning is not the right time to stumble and struggle through a song few people know.

Pay attention to your audience. Before you pick a song with a bass lead make sure someone is there who sings bass. If your experienced singers are out of town and your crowd is thin, choose easier songs. Don't just flip through the book and stop on any song you know, put some thought into your song selection.

Even if you don't lead songs, learn to sing. Stop making excuses and learn to sing. Worship is not a concert and you're not there to watch, you're there to participate. Make time and learn.

Leading A Prayer

We should all know how to pray, it's a necessary part of being a Christian. There are different kinds of public prayers: opening prayer, main prayer, dismissal prayer, giving thanks for a meal, etc. Each of these has its own purpose and should fit the occasion. Be mindful of what you're doing. You are talking to the God of Heaven, your Father who loves you. There are things to be thankful for and things we need. You're not performing for an audience. Hopefully you're not reciting a memorized script. Pray with the right spirit and understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15).

When you pray make sure you can be heard. Speak up. However you position your body during prayer, keep your head up. If your seat or arms obstruct your mouth people will have a hard time hearing.

Every prayer should include a word of thanks. We can be thankful for the opportunity to gather to worship, for our safe travels, for

God's mercy and love. If you have a guest speaker or some special occasion be mindful of it. You can't go wrong being thankful.

Opening prayers and dismissal prayers are typically short and intended for their particular purpose. If you haven't lead a public prayer before this is a good place to start. An opening prayer is meant to thank God for the ability to be together and worship and to seek His blessings during the service. There might be special needs or requests for prayer on behalf of the sick so be prepared. A dismissal prayer should include our thankfulness for being there to worship. You might ask God to protect everyone as they travel home and bless us throughout the week. Again, be mindful of anyone in special need.

The basic outline of a public prayer is the same as any other but the content is typically different. A public prayer is offered on behalf of the congregation and should be appropriate for everyone. You may be worried about a big plumbing project you started at home, but nobody else is except your family, so pray about that later. Pray about things that matter to the congregation.

Pay attention when others pray. (We should be doing this anyway, a public prayer is our prayer too). Later you can think about what you like and dislike about other people's prayers. You can use this as a model for your own.

Sometime at home sit down and make yourself an outline of what you think a public prayer should be. This may sound mechanical, or not from the heart, but you have to start somewhere. This is about preparation. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray He more or less gave them an outline to follow and fill in as needed. You can do the same. This way if you're called on to lead a prayer you'll be ready.

Consider His outline.

1. He acknowledges who God is. You're praying to your Almighty Father.
2. Remember His kingdom. Pray for the church and its work. Pray for your leaders, your teachers, and those who travel for His work. Jesus gave His life for her. The church is important.
3. In all things, His will be done.
4. Consider the needs of the church, your daily bread, literally and figuratively. There's almost always someone who is sick, hurting, or has lost a loved one.
5. Ask forgiveness, remembering your duty to forgive others.
6. Never forget the spiritual wellbeing of your brothers and sisters.

Think about these points and use them for your own prayers.

Once again, you're not from the 1600's. It is not necessary to pray using 1611 English. Speak like a normal person and be yourself. Be conversational when you pray. Don't use words or phrases you don't understand. People will know immediately this is not how you normally talk.

Sometimes people worry their prayer won't be long enough. Don't worry about this. Some people are eloquent. You may or may not be, it doesn't matter. The point is that you pray from the heart on behalf of the congregation. Make it relevant and meaningful for everyone. You're not there to be heard for your much speaking, so avoid filler. It is not necessary to add a lot of details about someone's illness. The Lord knows what is wrong with them already. If the congregation needs to know more, inform them before the service starts or during announcements.

A word about vain repetitions. Jesus warns in Matthew 6:7, "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words." There is no need in repeating yourself throughout the prayer. God hears

perfectly. If there's something really important happening in the congregation, pray more often.

On another note, it is not necessary to repeatedly address the Lord throughout the prayer. We begin a prayer with "Heavenly Father" or equivalent, it is clear who we are praying to. If you're talking with a friend you wouldn't begin every sentence of your conversation with "my friend." Why would you do this when you pray?

Congregational prayers are not the time for teaching. We have teaching for that. This is not a time to preach a sermon or make a point. If you're going to quote a scripture make sure it is meaningful to the prayer, as a prayer, and not a lesson. The Lord knows what His word says already.

In order to pray on behalf of the church it helps to be familiar with the church's needs. One way to do this is to make sure you attend the services. If you're letting other things interfere with your attendance, reevaluate your priorities. It's hard to be interested in the welfare of your brothers and sisters if you show up two minutes before Sunday morning worship starts, hurry out after the last amen, and don't see any of them again until next Sunday.

Don't make people uncomfortable. This isn't a time to grind axes or try to make a point about a grievance. If you're going to ask forgiveness for your brother for the ugly thing he said to you, do that at home. If it's that important the scriptures have instructions for dealing with a wayward brother. Read them and do as they say. If there's a matter causing hard feelings among the congregation, pray for peace and reconciliation. Don't make a case for your side of the argument. We may be God's children but we need to behave like adults.

Don't mix private or personal affairs in a public prayer. If a brother has confided a personal problem to you, the public assembly is not

the time to pray about it. It isn't the church's business. Don't cause embarrassment to someone in the assembly of the church.

Remember to be thankful. Like all children we spend far too much time asking for things and not enough saying thanks.

Be sincere when you pray.

Serving The Communion

The communion is the principle reason we gather for worship on the Lord's Day. It's our time to remember Jesus' sacrifice for our sins, as He commanded.

Do not forget the point of communing is to remember. Men often wonder what to say. Make your words appropriate when you stand before the table. You might read a short passage from Matthew 26 or 1 Corinthians 11. You could say a couple of words to remind everyone you're there to remember the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. If you mention the significance of the loaf or the one cup, make sure you understand what you're saying. Don't turn your remarks into a sermon. Your much talking can be counterproductive, putting people's minds on things besides remembrance. Keep your words brief, simple, and appropriate.

If there are visitors you should mention in your remarks that the Lord's Supper is for members of the church. More will be said about this later.

How should you offer thanks? Not to belabor the point, but again, you are giving thanks, not preaching a sermon. Men will get themselves tongue tied trying to point out the significance of the cup as opposed to the fruit of the vine and how they're different and what they mean.... Members participating in the Lord's Supper

should already know these things. If you want to make remarks, do so before the prayer, not during.

The scriptures say the Lord gave thanks. This is all that's necessary. Consider referring to the bread and the cup as Paul does in 1 Corinthians 10 where he writes:

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

In your prayer it is perfectly appropriate to be thankful for "this loaf, the communion of the body of Christ" and "this cup, the communion of the blood of Christ." You can't go wrong using Bible terms to describe Bible things.

Let's pause briefly here to make sure we understand the appropriate use of the word testament. When Jesus says "This cup is the new testament" He is not referring to the written scriptures. He is referring to the covenant as the NKJV reads, the agreement, not the text. If you have a few words to say about the New Testament in your remarks, make sure you understand this point.

If you've never served the communion, pay attention to how others do it. Spend a few minutes at home thinking about how you would approach it and what you would say. Think about the prayers of thanksgiving you would offer. Think about all this ahead of time and be prepared. Serving the communion deserves as much attention and preparation as teaching a lesson.

There are things to consider when you pass the items around the congregation. You might have an elderly member who sits at the end of the pew and maybe lacks the strength to pass the cup to someone far away. Be there to help them. When you're finished with the loaf, stop and ask if anyone has been overlooked. Do the same with the cup. A mom may have come back from the restroom with her baby when you weren't looking. You're not in a race to get done, so take your time.

What To Do About A Spilled Cup

Accidents happen. It's best that we plan ahead. What should you do if the loaf is broken or the cup spilled? We will consider our problem in view of a spilled cup, which seems more likely, but the same principles would apply to a problem with the loaf.

If you have a partial spill leaving enough juice in the cup to finish the communion there's no need to refill. Continue from that point. If there isn't enough, there are three options.

1. Refill the cup and start the communion over again with the loaf.
2. Refill the cup, give thanks, and finish from where the loaf was broken or the cup spilled.
3. Refill the cup, give thanks, and start the cup over from the beginning.

Let's begin with the definition of 'communion' to help us decide. Communion - a having in common, partnership, fellowship, denotes the share which one has in anything, in participation, fellowship recognized and enjoyed.

When we commune we share or participate in a common thing. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper the Bible says "Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you.'" – Matthew 26:27
Jesus' command was for everyone to drink from the cup which He had blessed.

In view of this information we would rule out option #2.

What about option #1? The Bible says "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.'" – Matthew 26:26

If everyone has eaten the loaf then this command has been fulfilled. There's no need to start again with the loaf, ruling out option #1.

This leaves option #3 which makes the most sense in light of our reading. This insures everyone in the congregation has shared the same loaf and the same cup of blessing. It is consistent with the definition of communion and the commandments of the Lord.

We should note here that you cannot replace a broken loaf or refill the cup unless you have an extra loaf and more juice available. You might find out if this is the case and if not, discuss it with the leaders of your congregation.

Be mindful of the loaf as you pass it. Sometimes pieces will break off or members break off more than they want and leave part of it. If this happens remove the extra piece. This might seem a minor thing, but having extra pieces isn't any different than breaking the loaf before you start.

Teaching

James 3:1 says, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment." James is not trying to discourage you from becoming a teacher, if you're qualified. Teaching is a great responsibility and cannot be taken lightly. You should ask yourself if you're qualified. Have you studied as much as you should? Are you knowledgeable in the scriptures? Are you living as you should? Not everyone is capable of being a teacher. Being a competent teacher requires a significant investment in reading and studying. If you're not willing to put in the time you should not be a teacher.

A discussion of study methods and lesson preparation is beyond the scope of this book. If you want to be a teacher ask the leaders

at your congregation to help you learn to study and prepare a lesson.

If you want to be a teacher, start small and simple. Your first lesson should not be a dissection of Romans 8. The first thing you should do is read publically. Some churches have a scripture reading at the beginning of the service, volunteer to read. You might work with one of your teachers to read the opening scriptures for his lesson.

As we said in the General Thoughts section of this book, speak normally, slow down, speak up, and be prepared. Practice your reading ahead of time. Make sure you know how to pronounce all the words properly, especially the names of people and places. If you're unsure, ask someone.

When you're ready to start teaching, pick a basic topic and prepare a five minute lesson. Study a topic like honesty, or controlling your speech. Pick a subject you need to understand better yourself. Review it with a local teacher and edit as needed. When it's ready ask the leaders if they will work you into the teaching.

Some general thoughts:

1. Read more. You need to be familiar with your Bible.
2. Study more. You need to understand your Bible better.
3. Teach only the truth. Make sure you have scripture to prove the things you say.
4. Keep your opinions to yourself.
5. Start preparing well in advance. Give yourself plenty of time to read and study, review your notes, and practice. There's no excuse for being unprepared.
6. Be mindful of your time. Making your lesson longer isn't going to make it better. If you can't discuss your topic in 30-40 minutes you should probably narrow your topic or split it up.

7. Organize your thoughts and stay on topic. Have an introduction, body, and conclusion.
8. Your job as a teacher is to educate. Educating can be to inform, encourage, or correct.
9. Make your lessons practical and useful. We often hear prayers that include something about taking a lesson home and “applying it to our lives.” Give people something worth taking home and applying.
10. Choose subjects that are appropriate for the audience, occasion, and your teaching ability. Have you had regular visitors? Study the church or the plan of salvation. Has a member recently lost a loved one? Study something encouraging and uplifting. Be mindful of the congregation’s needs.
11. Don’t be offensive or needlessly controversial. Your teaching should always be done with love and humility.
12. Commentaries can be useful, but know their place. You’re teaching from the Bible, not a commentary. Read and study for yourself. Let the Bible define and explain itself. It’s fine to see what other men think about a passage, but don’t let that be all you know about the scriptures. If you use someone else’s material in your lesson give that person credit.
13. In some cases it’s ok to say “I don’t know.” This might be appropriate if you’re doing a chapter study. You might be assigned a chapter with a difficult passage in it. If you don’t understand it, say so. Consider asking a more experienced teacher to address that part of the chapter, but don’t wait until the last minute. Obviously you shouldn’t prepare a topical study and include material you don’t understand.
14. Be open to correction and criticism.

If you’re going to be a teacher be serious and prepared. Start working now. Commit yourself to regular reading and study of the scriptures.

Offering The Invitation

When you start teaching you're going to need to offer the invitation at the end of the service, if that is your tradition. You can start preparing now by paying attention to how others do it. If you haven't done it before, make it a part of your lesson notes.

Before we go any further, understand this is not to be like the Catholic confessional. Every member is a priest and has the right to repent and seek God's forgiveness on their own. Never, ever, leave people with the impression they can only obey the gospel or confess their sins at the end of a service. Would you want someone who decides to obey the gospel on Monday to wait until Sunday to do so? Remember you are providing *an* opportunity for others, not *the* only opportunity. We would all do better if we made this clearer when offering in the invitation.

When offering the invitation let the audience be your guide. If everyone in the assembly is a member there isn't much point in spelling out all the steps to obey the gospel. If there are visitors you should be prepared to spend a couple of minutes outlining the necessary steps. As unlikely as it might be they will go forward at that moment, it's a good opportunity to teach them the most basic things about becoming a Christian. It gives them something to think about and might encourage further discussion.

Do you know the steps by heart? Do you know which verses are important? Have you memorized them? Memorizing them would be a good idea if you're going to be a teacher.

Here's a list you can start with:

Hearing the word – Romans 10:17

Believe/Faith – Hebrews 11:6, Mark 16:16, John 8:24, Acts 16:31, Romans 10:10

Repent – Acts 2:38, Luke 13:3, Acts 3:19

Confess – Matthew 10:32-33, Romans 10:9-10

Baptism – Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, 1 Peter 3:21

Familiarize yourself with the conversion stories in Acts 2, Acts 8, Acts 9, Acts 10, Acts 16, and Acts 22. These are very useful. If you're going to be a teacher have lesson notes on the plan of salvation.

Almost everyone who teaches has an outline they follow nearly every time. That's fine, but study so you can be more flexible when circumstances call for it.

How To Baptize A Person

It's important you understand what you're doing, the steps that must be accomplished, and the information you need to provide the one you're baptizing.

What baptism is for:

1. Remission of sins
2. Saves
3. Adds to the church

The one being baptized should understand what happens when he or she is baptized. Many denominations baptize for other reasons. Many believe you can be saved and baptized at a later date. It's also important to know that baptism adds you to the Lord's church, not a denomination. Put some time into studying baptism so you understand fully.

When a person says they wish to be baptized there are steps that must be performed to accomplish it correctly. Confirm their belief in Jesus as God's son and their willingness to repent of their past life and live faithfully.

Next the individual needs to confess their faith. This is not a confession of sins, it is their public confession that Jesus is the Son

of God. They need to state with their mouth that they believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Romans 10:10). It is common to quote the Ethiopian's words to the person and asking them what they believe. You can't go wrong following a Bible example.

After a person makes their confession they can be baptized.

Before getting into the water there are a couple of things you should explain to them about the mechanics of baptism. Traditionally people are baptized by lowering them in the water as if they were laying down. This is the method we will describe.

1. Tell the person to bend their knees when you begin to lower them into the water. This will help keep them from slipping (and taking you down with them).
2. Have them hold their own nose with one hand and hold their wrist with the other. Besides keeping water out of their nose it keeps their hands and arms under control. People will sometimes try and grab something when you lower them into the water, then you have to do it again.

This method reminds us of a burial and might be preferred for that reason. There are other acceptable methods, which might be appropriate under particular circumstances. The requirement is that a person be immersed. If you're baptizing someone who is very tall it may be easier to have them kneel in the water and push them under until immersed. You might be in a place with limited water and have to use a barrel or other small container to baptize in where it isn't possible to lay them back in the water. These are fine as long as you have sufficient water to immerse the person.

In order to accomplish the baptism there are other items to consider:

1. Make sure you have enough water. While most baptisms are done in a baptistery, pool, or pond, they've also been done in cattle troughs, hot tubs, and therapy pools.

Whatever your facility, you need enough water to completely immerse them.

2. If possible have someone as a witness. You won't be able to see everything yourself, an extra set of eyes can make sure they are immersed completely.
3. Place one hand over their hand or wrist and the other arm across their shoulder blades. Your shoulder will get wet but it gives you good control and makes the other person feel safe.
4. If you're using a pond or pool stand the person facing the deeper end so you lower their head toward the shallow end. You want to make sure if someone slips you end up in the shallow water.
5. If you're baptizing someone bigger than you make sure you can handle them. There's nothing wrong with having a second person help.

If the person is not fully immersed they have not been baptized, you'll need to do it again. They might slip and end up with a foot out of the water. They might grab the side of the baptistery. If you don't have someone watching you may miss this. If any part of them is not under the water, do it again. Don't be tempted to think it was good enough because of your intentions, they must be fully immersed.

While it is not technically necessary to say anything when you immerse them; it's a good idea. You are performing a once in a lifetime service for that person. Your words establish exactly what is being done so there are no questions about the validity of their baptism later. By your words you confirm you are performing a scriptural baptism.

1. You are baptizing by the authority of Jesus Christ
2. You are baptizing them for the remission of their sins
3. You are baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

As an example you might say:

“By the authority of Jesus Christ, and for the remission of your sins, I baptize you in the name of Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

Lower them in the water, pause for a second and make sure they are immersed, then lift them out of the water. Check with your witness to make sure they are satisfied.

Dry off and have a word of prayer.

What To Do When Someone Comes Forward

What do you do if someone responds to the invitation? You need to think about that ahead of time.

If you're inexperienced or uncomfortable, there's nothing wrong with asking one of the leaders to take over. If you're unsure what to do it's probably for the best.

To be a teacher or leader in the church you need to know what you're doing. First, make sure you pay attention when the invitation song is sung. Someone might come down an outside aisle, you want to make sure you see them. After the song have everyone take their seat, go to the person, sit down next to them, and ask them what they need. Remember this can be a very emotional time for them and they're probably nervous, so be helpful and patient as needed. Listen carefully, make sure you understand what they've said and know what they need.

If they want to obey the gospel, confirm with them that they believe Jesus is God's Son and they're willing to repent of their sins and change their life. Let them know you'll be asking them to publically confess their faith and making arrangements for their baptism. At this point you can address the congregation. Explain to them the person's desires. You can have them make their public

confession now or wait until you're ready to baptize them. Let your circumstances be your guide.

Refer to the section How to Baptize a Person to complete the needed steps.

What should you do if a member comes forward? Again, when the invitation song ends, have everyone take their seat, go to the person, and ask them what they need. Sometimes people are struggling with their life and just need prayer. They may not want to give you all the details and that's fine. Explain this to the congregation and offer prayer for them.

If the member wants to confess sin, there can be many ways to handle that. A man may wish to speak for himself to the congregation. A woman might write a note to be read.

Remember a public confession is to address public sin, sins that are known to the congregation or community. The person may confess private things to you, maybe involving another person. It may not be necessary or appropriate for you to repeat those things to the congregation. Use your best judgment. You can say to the congregation that he/she has sin in their life and desires prayer.

Someone confessing a private sin or sin involving others may benefit more if you meet with them later. You should study and discuss with them the correct ways to confess their sins, and if necessary, how to seek another person's forgiveness. Explain to them that private matters aren't the business of the congregation. You can also take this time to figure out if you can help them in some way. There aren't very many circumstances in which a member owes an explanation to the whole church.

When you offer prayer for someone, remember you're praying for them. It doesn't need to be long, it doesn't need to be about anything else. Focus on that person's needs.

Visitors

What should you do when there are visitors? At the very least a friendly greeting is in order, it usually depends on the circumstances.

If they come with another member a handshake, smile, and introductions are enough, but what if they come in on their own? We should pause here and ask, does anyone stay around the door before services start? Or does everyone go to their seat and wait? Someone should be there to greet people.

Now back to the visitor you don't know. They might be traveling from another congregation. They might be from the community. A brother or sister can probably tell you where they're from. If they're a member you may want to ask them to participate in the service. You should discuss as a congregation what your policy is about that.

What if they're not a member? Obviously you want to make them feel as welcome as possible. If it's Sunday morning it's a good idea to briefly explain the service to them, particularly the communion. Many people have never heard of using a single cup and may be startled by it. Mention to them, tactfully, that the collection and communion are intended for members and they are under no obligation to participate.

If you're serving the communion that day consider mentioning in your remarks that the communion is for members of the Lord's church. Be tactful. Your purpose here is not to offend. People need to have enough information to make informed decisions. At the very least you've given your visitors the opportunity to consider this and abstain if they wish.

As a congregation you need to consider the different scenarios you might encounter and plan ahead. Do you refuse to serve someone

you know isn't a member? How do you do that if they came with someone else and are sitting in the middle of the row? What if someone comes in after services start and you don't know anything about them? Are they a member or not? The church's leaders should give these situations some thought. Be prepared so you don't have questions when the situation arises. This helps prevent confusion, embarrassment, and hurt feelings.

Be Available

If you've ever been responsible for arranging the services you know what it's like pacing around the back door waiting on people to show up because there are two more songs to lead and you've already given yourself one. Don't treat your church leadership that way. Be there early enough to participate and be thoughtful about it. Don't lead that same song you've lead the past couple of Sundays. Pick out something appropriate. If you're leading a prayer make sure you know if anyone is sick. Are there visitors? Have you said hi? Do you know where they're from? You can't do any of that if you're late.

We're all late once in a while, things happen. But if you're late all the time there's a reason. You're not getting out of bed when you should, or you're letting other things interfere. Mostly you're not preparing. Show some respect for the worship and be there with plenty of time to spare.

Be at the services. Far too many people take a very casual approach to any other services besides Lord's Day morning. If the leadership at your congregation has decided to have Sunday evening and maybe a mid-week service, be there. We often emphasize the "not forsaking the assembly" part of Hebrews 10:25, which is fine, but we neglect what is said right before that, "let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works." You can't do any of that if you're not there. If you're not there you can't encourage

anyone, you can't participate in the worship, and you lose track of the needs of other people. If your life is so arranged that you regularly miss the services, you need to rethink how you're living. If you have hobbies or other interests you choose instead, get new hobbies. You hurt yourself, your family, and the whole church when you miss the assembly.

Dress Appropriately

The church may not have a dress code, but dress appropriately anyway. Society has become more casual over the years. Jackets and ties aren't commonly worn anymore. We still need to show respect for our worship, even in the way we dress. You're not going to the grocery store or out to wash the car, so put on something a little nicer.

Conclusion

We hope this little book is helpful. When you're ready to participate, go to worship and volunteer. If you're uncertain meet with one of your leaders and practice. Whatever you do, keep working. The Lord's church needs members who participate and are serious about the worship. Please consider the contributions you can make to the local church and begin working. Your growth will be rewarding to you and encouraging to others.

Index

Preparing for Service	1
Intent of this Book	1
Order	1
Tradition	2
General Thoughts	3
Assumptions, What this Book is Not	4
Passing the Collection	4
Leading a Song	5
Leading a Prayer	7
Serving the Communion	11
What To Do About A Spilled Cup	13
Teaching	14
Offering the Invitation	17
How To Baptize A Person	18
What To Do When Someone Comes Forward	21
Visitors	23
Be Available	24
Dress Appropriately	25
Conclusion	25

To those who wish to
serve in the worship
and in His Kingdom.