

# A Liturgy for Families

in the style of Godly Play

ST STEPHEN'S  
children

## Prepare

You almost certainly have everything you need at home already, but things will go much more smoothly if you can gather it all together before you begin!

- Find a **place where the family can sit in a circle**, all on the same level. I suggest the dinner table or a blanket on the floor.
- A **bible**, with bookmarks at [Psalm 23](#) and [John 10](#). If you don't have a bible at home, you can visit [BibleGateway.com](http://BibleGateway.com) on your phone or computer. Bible storybooks are also nice to have, but not essential.
- Some **basic art supplies**. Paper and pencils or crayons are just fine. Playdough or scissors and glue would make it even more special. You don't need colouring pages or 'activities' – rather save those for later.
- *Optional: If you are able to watch a **video** in the circle (on a laptop or tablet), I make some suggestions below, but it is more important to connect comfortably to each other in the circle than to watch the videos.*
- *Optional: A **candle, matches** and perhaps candle **snuffer** (you can use an old teaspoon)*

## Gather

Gather the family into the circle. Check that everyone is ready – take care of any bathroom breaks, drinks of water or distracting toys now. Then say something like,

*We all have many things to think about or even worry about. This time is a time to become calm and think about the things that are most important. To help us be ready, let's take a few slow, deep breaths .*

*Keep breathing in a way that is comfortable for you. Try to imagine that you are breathing in God and breathing out all your stress . . .*

*Now I am going to pray a very simple prayer: Come, Holy Spirit.*

*Let's sing together Jesus, name above all names.'*

If you know the song, you can sing it without accompaniment. (The words are below.) You can also find it on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/lnPf4dxEpKo>.

*Jesus, name above all names  
Beautiful Saviour, Glorious Lord  
Emmanuel, God is with us  
Blessed Redeemer, Living Word*

-----optional section (requires a candle)-----

Place the candle, unlit, in front of you in the circle. Say,

*'There was once somebody who did such amazing things and said such wonderful things that people began to follow Him. As they followed Him, they wondered who He really was and so they asked Him. One time when they asked, He said, "I am the light."*

Light the candle. Take a few moments to just watch the flame and enjoy the light. When there has been time to appreciate it say,

*'There came a time when even the one light changed. See how the light is all in one place? That is good, because it makes it easy to see. Now I am going to change the light.'*

Snuff the candle slowly (or blow it out). Doing it slowly produces more smoke, which you can point to as you say,

*'See how the smoke is spreading out to fill the room? It is hard to see, but wherever you go in this room, it will be there.'*

Take a few moments to watch the smoke spreading and wonder silently. Then carefully move the candle out of the circle.

-----end optional section-----

## The Word of God

(Choose one in this section)

**A:** Watch The Parable of the Good Shepherd at <https://youtu.be/4I9GiHqIshU>. The storyteller asks several 'wondering questions' at the beginning and the end. Pause the video if anyone wants to share their wondering with the rest of the family. There are no right or wrong answers – the important thing is to listen to each other. (It is okay if children have very literal interpretations and adults are more metaphorical.) Sometimes everyone wants to keep their wondering inside themselves, and that is fine too. Give each other space to be yourselves!

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**OR**  
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**B:** If you are not watching the video, you can read the story straight from the bible. Read slowly and leave pauses for everyone to think. (With younger children you might only read the first passage.) The passages to read are:

[Psalm 23](#)

[John 10:1-18](#)

After reading the passages, you can ask the 'wondering questions' below. People might respond out loud, or just think about their answers. Both are good. There are no right or wrong answers – the important thing is to listen to each other. (It is okay if children have very literal interpretations.) You don't have to ask all the questions on the list. It's also okay to make one question into several if people have a lot to say and new ideas come up.

- *I wonder how the sheep feel?*
- *I wonder where the place in the story could really be?*
- *I wonder if you have ever come close to such a place?*
- *I wonder if you have ever found the good grass?*
- *I wonder if you have ever had the cool, clear, fresh water touch you?*
- *I wonder if you ever had to go through a place of danger?*
- *I wonder how you got through?*
- *I wonder if you have ever been lost?*
- *I wonder if you have ever been found?*
- *I wonder if the Good Shepherd has ever called your name?*

## Response

Whichever way you heard the Word of God, when the wondering has finished, bring out the art supplies, Bible and storybooks (if you have them). Say something like,

*'I wonder what work you need to do now? Perhaps you would like to make something about the story, or about another story you know. You could also read the story here in the bible, or have me read it to you. Only you know what is right for you.'*

One at a time, ask each person to choose their work and begin. Be open to creative suggestions. Sometimes children make unexpected connections. (For example, what you think is just a paper aeroplane might be a 'Holy Spirit plane' to your child!) Try to leave at least 10-15 minutes for this work, but children often like to work for an hour or more, if there is time available. You could choose to let everyone continue at their own pace, or to end formally with this blessing:

*'Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, forever.'*

## Notes

- Children may expect a 'feast' after the response. If you want to, you can re-form the circle to serve a simple snack, give each person an opportunity to pray and then eat together before saying the final blessing. However families have many other opportunities to eat together, so this is optional!
- You can 'recycle' this liturgy by using any bible story in the 'Word of God' section. Good wondering questions are:
  - What did you like best about this story?
  - What was most important about this story?
  - Who are you in this story, or which part of the story is just for you?
  - Is there any part of this story we could leave out and still have all the story we need?
- Much of this is adapted from *The Complete Guide to Godly Play* by Jerome Berryman.
- For a comprehensive approach to doing Godly Play in the family, see *Stories of God at Home: A Godly Play Approach* by Jerome Berryman.