

Worship Ritual #1

Centering Stillness to Find Peace

A Personal Story to Start Things Off

Instead of jumping right into family worship and formal ritual, we suggest that parents begin by telling a personal story related to the monthly theme. This helps put the worship into context and reminds your children that this family worship is connected to the wider theme exploration that your entire church is doing this month.

So for this ritual, begin by sharing a personal story about a time when stillness helped you find peace, helped you find your center when you were being pulled this way and that. Talk about how good it made you feel to recenter yourself to what was important. Perhaps it was sitting down to a candlelight dinner of pizza after burning the meal. A quiet moment in the hospital after Grandma had an emergency but got better. Maybe it was simply a walk in the woods that helps you put your worries into perspective. Afterward, consider inviting other family members to share a similar story of their own.

Centering Sound

Move from “regular time” to “sacred time” by sounding your bell, chimes, ringing bowl, or ringing glass. Here are ritual words to go with your centering sound:

“To this quiet place of beauty, we come from busy things

Pausing for a moment for the thoughts that quiet brings.”

Chalice Lighting

Use this one or write your own...

As we kindle this chalice,

May its light pull our attention to what is in front of us.
May it draw us away from our worries and the busyness of our days,
And help us notice the beauty of the season,
the gift of each other,
And the peace that waits within.

Centering Music

Here are some songs about stillness for this time of connecting to the theme through music. Choose one that you like the best. While sitting quietly and listening to the song is a good way to centering yourself and your family, it may be hard for younger children to listen for the length of an entire song. If that is the case for you, consider playing only a part of the song or inviting your children to draw a picture while listening, maybe a picture of the still starry night sky.

- Stillness with Lea Morris

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgXg3CzKXeA&feature=youtu.be>

- Boyz II Men - In the Still Of The Night (I'll Remember) [Cover of Five Satins]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7RMiaVLBW8>

The Giving Bowl

Remember that money is not the only way we are generous to others. So, in addition to or instead of money, consider writing down on small pieces of paper ways you can support others or special organizations this month. Be sure to bring in the monthly theme by talking about how the organization you are supporting helps you heal the world.

Ritual words: *"We drop our coins (papers) in and fill the bowl. Serving others makes us whole."*

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Invite each family member to pick up a rock and share something they are thankful for about the past week while dropping the rock into the bowl of water. The aim here is to make room to notice the good things all around us even though times are hard.

After this first round of joys, invite each family member to choose another rock and share something or someone they have a concern for - someone or something they are holding in their hearts and prayers. This is a way to bring the struggles of others into our hearts.

And don't forget that the rocks love being used in this ritual and they can be pulled out of the water and used as "double rocks" if there are more joys and concerns. :-)

Ritual Words:

"We listen to each other; it is a holy act.

To share our joys and sorrows, with grace it flows on back."

Enriching Our Chalice Home: Centering Stillness to Find Peace

Inspired by our monthly theme, each family worship ritual will guide us in adding a symbolic object/token to our Chalice Home. This month we honor the way stillness helps us pay attention to the beauty and peace of the season and act as a remedy to the commercialism, distraction, and stress of the holidays.

Our new symbolic token/object will act as a reminder of this gift of stillness during the holiday season and the months to come.

Explain:

Stillness can help stop worries and bring you back to your center. We all know what it's like to be overwhelmed by our emotions. For example, when someone makes us mad, when we feel sad, or when, especially during this time of year, we are worried about picking out the right presents, or whether we will be able to see our loved ones at all because of COVID. All of it adds up to the feeling of being off-balance and even dizzy. Which is why it's so important to develop the practice of stillness and find your center. Stillness helps us find peace in the midst of being overwhelmed by the holidays and at any time. So, lean into this gift of stillness with one of the two optional practices below.

Instructions:**Preparing for Silent Stillness**

- Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor.
- Put your hands on your lap or on your knees.
- Sit up nice and tall.
- Focus your eyes in front of you or close them.
- Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Option #1 - Listening to the Bell. Invite your family members to listen to the ringing of your bell or chime until they can't hear the sound anymore. The goal is for everyone to focus and listen as carefully as possible for *exactly* when the ringing stops. Have everyone raise their hand when they can't hear the sound anymore, even the faintest echo of it. Sometimes closing your eyes increases your focus.

Option #2 - Belly Breathing. [If you are going to do this, invite family members to get a stone or a stuffed animal beforehand.] Lie on your back on the floor. Place a stone or a stuffed animal on your stomach. Simply observe the item as it rises up and down as you breathe for a minute or two. Invite family members to notice how focusing your attention in this way, allows one's stress and worry to fade into the background.

After sharing the Stillness:

Invite each family member to share what they noticed during the stillness of the practice you choose. Ask questions like: Did you feel calm? Did you notice a memory pop up? Or a thought? Did you hear an inner voice? What happened during your time of stillness? Also be sure to talk about how these practices are available anytime we are stressed, worried, or overwhelmed by strong feelings.

Adding Your Symbol to Your Chalice Home:

For Option #1: Each family member rings the bell and recites the following words. Then add the bell (or re-dedicate your centering bell) as a symbol for stillness on your Chalice Home.

"I ring this bell to remind me of the way I can practice stillness to find peace during the holidays."

Family responds: *"May you find moments of stillness, beauty, and peace this season!"*

For Option #2: Each family member adds the stone or stuffed animal that they placed on their stomach.

"I place this [stone/stuffed animal] to remind me of the way I can practice stillness to find peace during the holidays."

Family responds: *"May you find moments of stillness, beauty, and peace this season!"*

Bless Your Objects

"[Spirit of Life and Love], Thanks for the many ways each of us finds moments of stillness and calm. May we remember to celebrate the beauty and peace of this season through stillness. May our calm and stillness help bring beauty and peace to the world around us."

Setting an Intention

As you bring your family worship to a close, pause for a moment to think ahead about the coming weeks and make a stillness-related intention/promise for how you want to act, what you want to remember, or how you want to treat others.

There's a book called "[Unplug the Christmas Machine](#)." The Christmas Machine is a metaphor for all of the things that have changed winter's celebration of stillness, peace, and beauty into a time of commercialism, distraction, and stress.

Here's the antidote to the Christmas Machine, as described in the book. They call it the Christmas Pledge; you could also call it the Winter Holiday Pledge:

"The Christmas Pledge:

Believing in the true spirit of Christmas, I commit myself to...

- * Remember those people who truly need my gifts.
- * Express my love in more direct ways than gifts.
- * Examine my holiday activities in the light of my deepest values.
- * Be a peacemaker within my circle of family and friends.
- * Rededicate myself to my spiritual growth."

In addition to reading the general pledge as is, consider having each family member offer up a particular way they promise to bring one of these general commitments to life. *"In the coming weeks, I will try to meet the Christmas/Winter Holiday Pledge and _____."*

Extinguishing the Chalice

*"We gather the warmth of love,
the light of truth, and the energy of action into our hearts.*

We return to the world of do and say,

Carry it forward into the dawning day.

Go Now in Peace.

Amen."

Instructions: Use your hands in a gather/cupping gesture and bring them to your heart. Repeat after the "warmth of love," "the light of truth," and the "energy of action." View Katie's YouTube video demonstrating how to add a gesture to these words: <https://youtu.be/GEF4Hdm08oM>