

3 TIPS FOR WORSHIPING ONLINE

2020 has certainly been an interesting year. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly every facet of our daily lives have been noticeably and significantly altered. Within a matter of weeks, businesses small and large moved their employees to mobile work stations, parents became school teachers, and even most churches postponed physical gatherings in favor of online services. Of course, not a whole lot has changed since early March. Many of us are still working from home, the upcoming school year is filled with question marks, and although our church has returned to in-person services, a large number of households are continuing to worship online for the time being. If you're in that last camp, it can be difficult to stay engaged every Sunday when absent from the larger body of believers, but we want to be a resource to you. Here are three helpful tips for staying faithful while worshiping online this season.

Don't Take the Decision Lightly

Our world has changed drastically over the last several months, and so have our church services. The familiar smiles have been covered with face masks, Children's Ministry is on hold for the moment, and empty seats separate us from the next person in our row. Consequently, worshiping online in our pajamas can seem incredibly attractive when the alternative is burdened by so many inconveniences, but let me encourage you, for two reasons, to think more deeply about this decision than just what's easiest. First, throughout the New Testament, the local church is consistently described as a body or assembly (1 Corinthians 12:27; James 2:2). It's a physical expression of the unity God brings to His people, and we risk sacrificing that expression when we neglect meeting together for long periods of time.

Second, as the local church, the Word of God calls us to participate in certain activities that can only be done when present with one another. Teaching, admonishing, and singing together (Colossians 3:16); encouraging one another (Hebrews 10:25); and participating in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16-17) are just a few. These are life-giving, sanctifying experiences in the life of a Christian that we should look forward to, not quickly abandon. Undoubtedly, some will need to stay home for various reasons at this time, and we will continue to love and care for you. But for those of us who are able, let's strive to meet together as often as we can.

Remove Distractions

If you've chosen to worship online with us during this season, you know that your home is not free of distractions. Kiddos might be running around, that breakfast casserole you put in the oven is finally done, there are emails you could knock out, and so on. After all, when you're not physically stepping into a church building each week, it can be hard to feel like you're going to church at all, but the environment that's present in your home each Sunday is ultimately up to you. In order to create a space that's ready for worship, do everything in your power to remove those distractions around you. Silence or shut off your phone, close out all other apps on your device, and commit to not getting out of your seat until the service is finished. If you have young children that have difficulty sitting still, consider watching the service during nap time or later in the evening. As hard as it may be some weeks, don't let distractions keep you from genuine worship on Sunday.

Protect Your Sabbath

Related to the idea of removing distractions is the greater idea of protecting your sabbath. Because worshiping in the comfort of your own home can feel a bit less formal, treating Sundays like any other day of the week can be an easy habit to slip into. Maybe you're tempted to pick up an extra shift at work or finally complete that big home project, but according to Scripture, worshiping God and resting in God are two peas in a pod (Exodus 20:8-11; Hebrews 4:1-11). While streaming a service may not feel very churchy right now, establishing an atmosphere of rest in your home will go a long way in making Sunday a day of worship. If you're looking for additional resources related to worshiping online, visit our website at penningtonpark.com/livestream.