



ARTICLE

6 tips for “doing church online”

BY NATHANIEL WILLIAMS

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In this season of COVID-19, we have entered the uncharted waters of doing church online. And, to be honest, the phrase “doing church online” is a bit of a misnomer. The church is a community of redeemed people who regularly gather together to love God, love each other, and love their neighbors. Only in the rarest situations—such as a health concern or family crisis—should a person fail to gather with God’s people.

Clearly, right now we are all in one of those rare situations. We're facing a pandemic unparalleled in our lifetimes. So, since we can't in good conscience worship together in the same room, we must do the next best thing: worship together in different rooms.

How in the world do we do this? What should we do to maximize this admittedly strange experience? Our family has reflected on this question. Here are some tips we've come up with:

1. Worship at your normal time

Our church typically worships at 11 a.m., so our family will seek to worship at a similar time. This decision helps us maintain our normal weekly rhythms. Plus, setting a fixed time for worship prevents us from procrastination. More often than not, "I'll get to it later" is code for "It won't happen."

2. Eliminate distraction

Worship isn't the time for multitasking. I recommend silencing your phone, turning off the television, saving the dishes for later, and not worrying about preparing lunch. Your chores (and distractions) can wait. Your soul will thank you for it later.

3. Prepare something for your kids



If you have small kids, you may be tempted to kick them out of the room while you listen to the message in peace and quiet. As alluring as this may seem (and believe me, as a parent of 3 littles, it sounds really alluring), resist this

temptation. Find ways to keep them engaged in the worship service. We've prepared a coloring sheet for our kids on the passage we're studying. Either way, try to keep them in the room with you.

4. Supplement with your own family worship

Unfortunately, your Sunday School teacher or small group leader can't come to your house. But you can do simple things as a family to study the Bible, such as reading a passage together over breakfast, reading a children's Bible to your kids, playing hymns or Christian music, or praying together. In other words, don't sit back and be a mere spectator to the worship service; participate as a family before, during, and after.

While we may not gather in person as the church this week, we do not cease to be the church, even as we are scattered throughout different rooms.

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5. Stay committed to your local church

If you are a member at an average-sized church, you could probably find dozens of better preachers on television or at the megachurch in town. (I mean no disrespect here; I am a pastor of one of those average-sized churches, and I am fully aware that others are more gifted orators.) "Online church," you think, may be the time to listen to those other guys instead of your pastor.

But the beauty of your local church is that it is, indeed, local. Your pastor may not be the second-coming of Billy Graham, but he knows you, loves you, and has prepared his message with you in mind. Your fellow church members who are

also tuning in to the worship service are the same people who pray for you and are ready to serve you at a moment's notice. So don't use this time to disengage from the church and hitch your wagon to a celebrity preacher. Now's the time to lean in to your local church even more.

6. Encourage someone

For me, the best part of gathering on Sunday isn't the teaching (as important as I think it is) or the music (as much as I enjoy it). The best part is the encouragement—those conversations before the worship service, the time spent lingering afterward, the prayers in the parking lot, the hugs in the hallways. It's hard not to have that fellowship each week.

So, make a point to reach out to someone this week anyway. Give them a phone call, send them a text, or contact them on social media. Let them know you love them and are praying for them. Because, while we may not gather in person as the church this week, we do not cease to be the church, even as we are scattered throughout different rooms.

A version of this article originally appeared at [Cedar Rock FBC](https://cedarrokbaptist.wordpress.com/2020/03/22/put-your-clothes-on-and-6-other-tips-for-doing-online-church/)

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