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by

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## WORRRSHIP COMES WITH THREE R'S

The bumper sticker on the car said, "If you can read this - thank a teacher." Among the many talents which teachers possess and are able to share is the gift of reading. That is exactly why I feel it is rather presumptuous on my part to stand before you today to read a paper - regardless of the importance of the subject. If you cannot read this paper for yourself, we are in some real trouble. Rather, I would prefer to present my topic on worship to you rather than just read it. I would prefer to use the paper more as a text, then as the presentation. For all too often we miss the opportunities of interaction and of true communication when we are always reading. Choir directors know the importance of having the choir look up from its music. Congregational members need to have the pastor look at them and talk to them rather than read to them. And you can imagine what kind of activities your students would get themselves involved in if you were always reading your lessons to them. So I invite you to follow along with me in the paper and join with me as we rediscover or at least reemphasize the fact that **WORRRSHIP COMES WITH THREE R'S."**

If you are worried about my spelling please do not be dismayed, for it is an intentional misprint. For the point of the title for this paper is to note how worship of our God needs to be included in all aspects of our teaching, our school days and careers. That worship is not something to be reserved for just Bible history, catechism class or morning and afternoon devotions, but can be and

should be an integral part of each day and of every class. And that is really the overriding reason for this paper this morning and for the follow-up workshop this afternoon. We want to incorporate worship into our whole curriculum. But to do that, we need to know the reason for worship - and that is our first R.

At first blush, one might figure that the reason for worship is quite simple - we are supposed to. Yet if we take the role of the child, we might ask, "But why?" And what really is our answer? Worship for the most part is somewhat of an inheritance. We worship as we have been taught to worship. We perform the services of worship as we have been brought up in them. That is why changes in the liturgy and in the orders of service are so difficult to have people accept. We are "tampering" with inheritance. And yet, to effectively instill a desire to worship we need to know why we worship. There is more than one reason for worship in our lives. To begin with, worship is an act motivated by our desire to serve the Lord. It is an act by which we thank God for His love and grace. It is an act by which we acknowledge his power and authority. It is an act by which we can release our abundance of happiness and joy in our Lord and Savior. As the late Professor Blume wrote, "Worship is in its broadest sense, that activity of man, based upon the proper attitude of heart and mind, whereby he proclaims his reverence for God, exercises his fellowship with God, and performs the holy will of God." (WLQ Vol. 40, 1943 page 35) Worship is an act commanded by God. Note the following passages:

Exodus 23:25 Worship the Lord, your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water.

I Chronicles 16:29 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

Psalms 100:2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs.

Matthew 4:10 Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.

Hebrews 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.

To teach and define the love of God for our students is also to teach them to worship. Taking church attendance is a good thing, yet it is not to be the reason our students want to worship. In obedience to their Lord, in love for their Lord and in a desire to share with fellow human beings their joy, worship is not to become a "got to" but a "want to." The problem that tends to be most common in reaching this goal is that we very often are guilty of too narrow a perspective of worship. When we speak of worship don't we often immediately think of the Sunday morning worship service and with that presupposition also think of the designated or prescribed ways we worship. Weren't we all brought up with the assumption that church is where we worship and is a place to be quiet and sit still.

The blessings of energy which God gives to the two year old are not to be used in worship. They are to sit absolutely still and not move, even though God created their bodies with all those imaginary ants. We must sit rigid in Puritanistic fashion and only participate sufficiently that we can say we have done our duty. Do not sing too loud as a child (or adult) so as to draw attention. And of course, how many "wardens" are needed in order that our children

will all sit and behave when it comes to Christmas services or choir numbers. We need to break out of this particular mind set that limits worship to just church and the church service and see to it that our children see worship as a way of life. Worship though it can be considered a noun should always be taught as a verb.

There are 130 references in the New International Version of the Bible that contain the word, "worship." Of those 130 references, only 19 of them use the term "worship" as a noun, and of those 19, only 10 refer to the worship of the true God. While detailed facts such as these can be used to say any number of things, it is significant to note that "worship" is for most part considered to be an action - something that someone does, something we participate in. For this reason we must emphasize in our teaching that the reason we worship, is not because we always have before, or because our mothers and fathers do or tell us to, but because we want to do something for the Lord. And with that explanation, wanting to do something for the Lord, that in turn leads us also outside of the church walls into worship in our daily lives. It is to be taught as an Reaction or a Response (either R will do) to our Lord's love.

In Isaac Newton's third law of motion, he set forth the principle that for every action there is an equal and opposition reaction. No doubt, that may be a unique way to define or describe worship, yet it can prove to be very accurate. What was David's reaction to the forgiveness God granted him? What was Noah's reaction to being saved by the Lord? What was the reaction of the

people on Pentecost when they heard the saving gospel message? It was a reaction to worship. An action going up to the Lord, for the blessings that have been flowing down from him. (Sorry to say, but Newton's law fails in our definition for worship in that we can never return even in part all that the Lord send's our way.) It would then appear that incorporating worship into our curriculum is simply a need to list blessings and then begin the motivation. However, trying to motivate students to worship their Lord as a response to all he has done is not that easy.

First of all, we need to realize that our students do not really have a full grasp of all that he has done for us. In their young lives, they cannot fully comprehend all the ramifications of objective or subjective justification or the entire concept of sanctification. They can understand that Jesus loves them and cares for them. They can believe that he forgives them their sins and died on the cross and rose again. But a full appreciation of these acts of God, is difficult to respond to because of its lack of concreteness. We need to remember that most of what we teach in religion is abstract in nature and not readily understood, even by adults. After all, why do you think Jesus taught so often in parables? Please note, I did not say that teaching worship as a response to the love of God was impossible with children. If that were the case we could all go home now, for there would be no need for us. But we can reach our children, if first we reach ourselves.

It is vitally important that we make a full assessment of our own worship response to God and see what attitudes or responses we

conjure up for the students. When you go to church, where do you sit? In the back so you can go unnoticed, in the middle or in the front? Do you go for refreshment of your soul and motivation of your heart or because you have to? Do we look for our students to see who is missing again, or to see who needs our prayers? Do we say, "Okay let's hurry up and pray," or, "Okay, we have to have devotion now." Is the focus of our singing in church so as not to embarrass our class or to praise the Lord? Are our Christmas eve services intended to dazzle and show off our disciplinary skills or to thank God for the gift of His Son? Too often, because of the press of time, or the work load, or pressures of the job, or the long hours and the short pay, we fail to respond to the Lord's love and commitment to our lives. We overlook the small victories of the day and become overwhelmed by the failures of a few. We cannot expect our students to respond in worship, if we fail to set the example.

A recent study done by the Gallup Company notes that 81% of all students, come from homes where both parents are working. That means that the active and influential role models for our students lives have narrowed considerably and we as teachers need to fill those vacancies. If we want to understand worshipful response - we need only look to the prophet Daniel. There we see a man who lived his life in response to the Lord's love. Even though it would cost him dearly, he refused to stop worshiping. And his enemies knew that the only way to get something against him was to make his religion illegal. That is the type of models we need to be. We

need to be willing to wear our faith on our sleeve and let everyone see it, without shame or embarrassment. You should never be embarrassed that all you are is a Christian Day School teacher? For you are at the very top of your profession, regardless of the classes you teach. And you cannot successfully teach worship, if you yourself do not respond in worship or use the day to day happenings and resources of your classroom to show the students how to worship.

Now while your example of worshiping your Lord in all that you do is going to be the most enduring lesson to your students, it is the vast resources of of your classroom that will make your worship most meaningful for your students. To begin with, help them realize that religion, or being a Christian is fun. Too often our "sit still and be quiet" attitudes for church services, become the norm for our attitude toward religion. Use your classroom to impress upon the students the joy that is available to them in their faith. Do not reserve worship just for your devotions or Bible class, but incorporate worship in every subject you teach. If it is science, then let your experiments and adventures, highlight the natural knowledge of God and the loving concern of our creator. Let your math class reflect upon a God of order and perfection. Remind them of what a blessing God has provided for us in the knowledge to build computers, which are very poor imitations of our own brains which can process information faster and with more accuracy than any computer available. Be sure to note God's guiding hand in history, his authority in civics, his designs in geography, and his gifts and



blessings to be able to read. When you finish with a lesson, review for yourself, how Christ was shown in the lesson. How was your class different than that same class taught in the public sector?

And when it comes time to have the joy of Bible History or Religion class, do more than go through the stories everytime, but incorporate "worship" time into your class schedule. Teach them parts of the our liturgies in church, so that they too can participate in our formalized worship services. Have them pray for someone else or care for someone else. One of the greatest passages for worship and motivation to worship is found in I Corinthians 10:31 which reads, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God."

That passage in itself tells us that worship is not to be confined to anyone area of our life, but to our entire life. Worship needs to be a way of life, not just reserved for the pew but for the entire person. Just as true teaching comes with the three R's so also true worship comes with three R's as well. And the better we teach the three R's of worship, that of Reason, Response and Resources, the more dedicated students we will have to learn the three R's of education.