

Starting a New Home Life

Opening Prayer

Glory to you, our one God who is three loving persons, who created a mysterious order to the universe. We explore your creation and find both predictability and chaos. There are patterns we can understand and occurrences that confound our minds. Our households are likewise both predictable and chaotic. May we manage our households with the wisdom through which you manage the universe. May we love as you love, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Theme

Watch out and guard yourselves from every kind of greed; because your true life is not made up of the things you own, no matter how rich you may be (Luke 12:15).

For your heart will always be where your riches are (Luke 12:34).

Introduction

Home, household life, is crucial for most of us in order to discern God's call in our lives. God is present in the places we dwell. God whispers to us in the quiet of our homes. Also, God's message for us emerges from the loud and frenetic chaos of our homes. How do we manage household life so that we can hear and discern God's call?

In the chapter on "Managing Household Life" in the book *Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life* the author says,

It wasn't so long ago that the home was the center of our lives and society. A lot has changed in the past fifty or sixty years. Today, managing our household life seems to have gotten lost in the sea of other commitments and activities outside the home. Yet, each of us hungers for the stability of a home life that gives our lives order and nurtures loving relationships .

There was a time when, for most people, nearly everything happened at home. All of the important things like falling in love, births, parties, deaths, funerals, work, education, health care, employment, food production, and even waste management were primarily family responsibilities. There were no birthing rooms, party centers, funeral homes, factories, office buildings or extensive government programs. And up until the last two hundred years or so, most communities had no formal schooling or hospital facilities. Managing household life was the center of society. Today it is not unusual for women and men to feel a bit embarrassed when they admit that they spend their days keeping house.

Household life is much different today than in generations past. Still, home remains the place where we figure out how to live with one another, learn to be productive, develop habits of need and desire, manage frustration and rage, forgive one another, and simply how to “be” together. In the words of Sharon Doloz Park, “Our households are anchoring places where, over time, we craft the practices by which we prosper or fail to prosper” (*Practicing Our Faith*).

Every home is unique, yet God is present in each one. This reflection will help you discover God's presence in your home, and discern God's call as you start a new home life.

What's Changing?

In his book *Managing Transitions*, William Bridges writes that transitions always start with an ending. Seems odd, yes, but he maintains that the first step toward a life change is identifying what you are losing and learning how to manage the losses.

Creating a new home, whether your first, or the next in a string of many throughout your life, means change and transition. It means letting go of your former dwelling, and purposefully creating and dedicating your new home in a manner that not only recognizes God's presence there, but intentionally seeks to experience God's presence there.

Depending on the circumstances of this move, you may have some trepidation. All may be new to you; in addition to your new home, your neighborhood and community may be new. You may need to learn your way around. You may need to make new friends. Or perhaps this home comes as a result of a new household family structure, such as marriage or divorce, or a child moving out or moving in, or perhaps as a result of a family member's illness. Anxiety is to be expected; it's normal. Pay attention to those feelings. They are indicators of a life change that you and those of your household must now navigate.

Consider

In the article, [16 Ways to Help Your Family Transition to a New Home](#), the authors say:

Moving and having to say goodbye to a home full of memories can be pretty tough—but it's even tougher when kids are involved. Whether you're moving to a new city or simply moving down the street to a different neighborhood, the loss of familiarity for kids can be stressful.

Take a moment to read the entire article. Even if you do not have children, some of the suggestions may be useful, such as:

- ◆ Read books about moving
- ◆ Hide a time capsule
- ◆ Take pictures for a scrapbook
- ◆ Write a “goodbye letter”
- ◆ Bring your garden with you
- ◆ Put together a keepsake collage

- ◆ Host a farewell party
- ◆ And more . . .

Write and/or Discuss

Jot some notes or share with others your responses to these questions:

- ◆ What has been the hardest adjustment for you in this transition to a new home?
- ◆ What do you think has been the hardest adjustment for those you live with?
- ◆ What has been your most pleasant surprise? For them?
- ◆ Which of 16 ideas from the article resonates most for you right now?

Reflect

In the article [What Makes for a Spiritually Vibrant Household?](#), researchers from Barna wrote:

Good things happen when those who share a home also share everyday liturgies with one another. Good things happen when those who share a home habitually share their lives with others. And all of these good things—a support system, shared regimens, recreational and creative time, spiritual discipline—are amplified when both Christian devotion and hospitality become part of the ethos of a household.

Journal

As you transition to a new home, take a few moments to write down the *ethos of the household* you wish to create. Another way to put it: how will you know when your new house has become your new home?

Take heart

Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain (Psalm 127:1).

What's Emerging in My Life?

Let's consider what might be emerging in your life and home as a result of this transition. As we do so, let us remember a few things that others have discovered about God's callings in their lives. We can say that responding to God's call will likely . . .

- ◆ Lead to happiness in the long run. If it makes you depressed, it's likely not God's call. Although it won't make you immune to all other emotions such as sadness, frustration, resentment, guilt, etc. But if there is no happiness whatsoever, somehow you are not aligned with God's desire.
- ◆ Not be easy. It will probably stretch you toward something you never thought you could do or be. But you can do it, especially if you have some help.
- ◆ Benefit others besides yourself. If it only involves the two of you, it's not God's call, and in the long run, likely not good for your marriage.
- ◆ Not be overly complicated. You'll be able to explain it to others in just a few words.

Consider

Let's consider the first bullet point that God's call will lead to happiness in the long run. There is virtually no argument that we should not try to make our homes into happy and healthy places. Responding to God's presence in the home will bring true, authentic, and lasting happiness.

View

Near the beginning of her video titled [Making Your Home into a Happy and Holy Place](#), Shifra Sharstein leads a guided meditation that directs the listener toward a particular way of viewing home and household life. View the guided meditation now, starting at 2:00 minutes and ending at 5:30 minutes.

Write and/or Discuss

Take a moment to reflect on these questions, then discuss or journal your responses.

- ◆ When you pictured yourself in your home, what were the feelings you identified?
- ◆ In what ways do you resonate with her vision of a "strong, positive energy coming from you and spreading to others around you, and to every room of your house, seeping out the door and further and further into the world"?
- ◆ Do you agree or disagree with her statement that "this is the way we view the home . . . and you are the center of all that positive energy because you are the person who makes a house a home"?

You may want to view the remainder of the video.

Take heart

O God,

Our property is a gift for enjoyment and a challenge to generosity.

Our loved ones are deeply mysterious and our surest gateway to your presence.

May we harmonize our households with your created order.

May we share the abundant blessings of your physical world.

Amen.

How Should I Live?

Now we seek to turn the corner and fully embrace the call. We seek to develop fruitful patterns of behavior and action that bring fulfillment.

Activity

Do the following with members of your household. If you live by yourself, you can still do the activity. Respond amen to the following statements about rooms in your household. Say "Amen" if:

- ◆ You have a room in your house that needs some attention.
- ◆ You have several rooms in your house that need some attention.
- ◆ You're embarrassed to have company over because of those rooms.
- ◆ You can't afford to fix everything in your house that needs attention right now.

- ◆ You don't have enough room in your household.
- ◆ You have rooms that are too cluttered.
- ◆ Some members of your family don't clean up after themselves.
- ◆ You're the one who cleans up after everyone else.
- ◆ You don't clean up after yourself and you like it when someone else does.
- ◆ You're the one who cleans up after everyone and you believe your behavior is enabling others to be messy.

Discussion

Following this litany, have a discussion about shared responsibility in your household. Mention that each member of the household is gifted by the Holy Spirit to make some kind of contribution for the good of all. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians says, "The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all."

Use these questions to get the discussion going:

- ◆ In a spirit of Christian service, in what practical ways are you called to contribute to the household?
- ◆ What household tasks tend to go undone? What can we do about them?
- ◆ Which household member(s) bear too much of the burden of managing our household? What can we do about that?

Consider

Here are links to helpful practices and strategies for responding to the call to build a new home life.

- *Ease the Transition of Moving to a New Home* from Hand in Hand Parenting. Whether you are moving across the country or across town, this can be a stressful time for the whole family. Here are a few things to think about as you prepare for and make your way through this major transition.
<https://www.handinhandparenting.org/article/ease-the-transition-of-moving-to-a-new-home/>
- *Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life*, Chapter 8 "Managing Household Life", John Roberto, Editor. Each of us hungers for the stability of a home life that gives our lives order and nurtures loving relationships.
<https://www.lifelongfaith.com/living-well-chapters.html>
- *What Makes for a Spiritually Vibrant Household?* Barna Research. How do our core relationships engage us in a thoughtful, transformative faith—the kind that holds up to and is passed down over time? This was one of the guiding questions of Barna's new Households of Faith report, based on an extensive study of practicing Christians and their living arrangements and routines.
<https://www.barna.com/research/spiritually-vibrant-household/>

- *An Ordinary Home Can Be a Holy Place* by Barb Peil. The word holy means “set apart” for a specific purpose—like the linen and silverware you use only on holidays. As a place where the truth about God and His Word is modeled, your home can be a holy place—set apart for His children to grow. “Our home? Holy?” Yes!
<https://www.insight.org/resources/article-library/individual/an-ordinary-home-can-be-a-holy-place>
- *How to Make Your Home a Domestic Church* by Fr Alexander Lucie-Smith. It is clear from the Holy Scriptures, that the Catholic faith is something that happens in a domestic setting. While going to Church is obviously essential, you can and indeed must also encounter God at home.
<https://catholicherald.co.uk/commentandblogs/2016/12/16/how-to-make-your-home-a-domestic-church>
- *Making Your Home into a Happy and Holy Place* (Video) by Shifra Sharstein. The Jewish home is a holy place and a mini-temple. You are its executive director. Here's how to make it even holier.
https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/3911939/jewish/Making-Your-Home-into-a-Happy-and-Holy-Place.htm

Take heart

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal (Matthew 6:19-20).

Blessing for Our Homes

This blessing may be used with a small group or with the entire congregation.

Introduction

Let us pray through our households in the name of the God who gracefully manages the great household of creation. We will respond to each prayer with "We thank you, Lord."

Reader: We pray through our kitchens, the place where we prepare the food that sustains our lives. For the goodness of kitchen work, we pray to the Lord.

All: We thank you, Lord.

Reader: We pray through our mealtime table, the place where we give and receive physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual nourishment. For the abundant and generous sharing at our tables, we pray to the Lord.

All: We thank you, Lord.

Reader: We pray through our living rooms and family rooms, the place where we gather to build relationships. For the laughter and tears that encourage and heal us, we pray to the Lord.

All: We thank you, Lord.

Reader: We pray through our bathrooms, the place where we begin and end our days. For the cleansing and refreshing that revitalizes us, we pray to the Lord.

All: We thank you, Lord.

Reader: We pray through our bedrooms, the place where God speaks in our dreams. For restful sleep that keeps our lives in balance, we pray to the Lord.

All: We thank you, Lord.

Leader

Our houses and apartments are holy places when we manage them with love, joy and gratitude. May we practice the ways of love in our households every day so that our saving faith will flood our neighborhoods with God's presence. We pray in the name of our God who promises to have many rooms for us in the household of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.