

WCAC WORSHIP

WORSHIP THEOLOGY

We use three principles to guide our worship. The first principle is that worship “is not something done to us or for us, but by us.”¹ We emphasize that we are not gathering on Sunday mornings to passively watch a performance. Worship is not something done for us. Coming to worship is not like sitting in the audience at a concert. It is more like being one of the musicians in a concert at which God is the audience. We gather to actively give God our worship. This means that the congregation works hard in worship. The congregation is called upon to confess sin and seek restoration of a broken relationship with God, to pray at length for the needs of the church and the world, to read the scriptures aloud and to sing. In fact, there is very little to sit back and passively watch. We gather to meet the Lord and give Him our worship.

The second principle is that our worship does not emphasize “my faith,” “my commitment,” or “what I am doing for God.” Rather, it emphasizes “what God has done for me.”² We do not sing about the greatness of our love for God. We sing about the greatness of His love for us. We do not put the spotlight on ourselves. We put the spotlight on Him. This profoundly affects our worship. For example, we often have testimonies from returning short-term missionaries. We ask these missionaries to not give us reports of what they did, but to give us testimonies of what they saw God doing. The result is that these testimonies become acts of worship as the whole congregation praises God in their hearts for His mighty works around the world.

The third and most important principle is that we gather to meet with the Lord. We are not gathering to learn about God, but to learn from Him. It’s not a classroom for memorizing facts about God; it’s an actual encounter with our Lord right here in our midst. He’s talking to us and we’re listening to Him in a relationship as real as any conversation we’ve ever had with a dearly loved friend or spouse. This profoundly affects what we do in worship. Since the Lord is right here in our midst, we spend substantial time every Sunday talking with Him in prayer. Through this, the entire congregation is continually being led into the actual experience of deeper, more genuine and heartfelt communication with our Lord.

The three principles that we follow, taken together, mean that we present each worship service to the Holy Spirit as an opportunity for Him to bring revival in our lives, to bring us back to Himself, and to bring us continually into a deeper and deeper relationship with Him. And that in turn means that the Holy Spirit can send us out of the worship service restored, renewed, and empowered to be His worshipping servants in our families, schools, workplaces, and all the mission fields where He wants us to be His hands and feet.

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¹ Robert Webber, *Worship Is A Verb*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1995 p.2

² Webber. p.118.

Music must serve several spiritual purposes: it should enable the worshippers to become articulate in the doctrines and spiritual matters of their faith; it should contribute to the call for commitment and edification of the believers; it should be therapeutically effective in calming troubled spirits (as when David played for Saul); and it should be inspirational so that the worshippers will go away uplifted and encouraged in their lives. Singing and playing musical instruments should communicate the Word and the worship, without overshadowing them. To do all this the music must be sacred; it must be set apart to God and be distinctly worshipful – holy in its content, holy in its sound, holy in its presentation.

There are several principles in the biblical text that should guide the church in its musical praise:

- 1) All forms of praise, whether proclamation, music, or dance, must focus on the Lord and glorify Him, not on the performers or the culture.
- 2) Musical praise should elevate the praise to be a glimpse of glory, not an imitation of the world; music is essential for worship because it makes the praise grand and glorious and unites the worshippers in harmony in the expression of their faith
- 3) Church music should have a balance of hymns, praise songs, doxologies, choruses, and litanies. A steady run of subjective, experiential songs without the doctrinal hymns will not be as edifying as the music should be; and an absence of the songs will not help the congregation express their spiritual experiences in harmony with the historic faith.
- 4) The music must be done well, not because it is a performance, but because it is an offering given to God, the best that the worshipping community can do.
- 5) Musical praise must harmonize with the spirit and substance of the service, for the services will change throughout the spiritual seasons of the year.³

³ Ross, Allen P. Recalling the Hope of Glory. Kregel Publications; Grand Rapids, MI. 2006 p 442-3.