REDEEMED ARABIC
DISCIPLESHIP

WORSHIP MATTERS

WOR 104

BY: BOB KAUFLIN

TUTOR: DANIEL EDWARDS

A Course based on:

WORSHIP MATTERS,
LEADING OTHERS TO ENCOUNTER
THE GREATNESS OF GOD
Course Texts:

2. Course booklet: Wor 104

Background Reading:

LESSON 1

WORSHIP OVERVIEW

PART 1:

Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) once said “Every definition is dangerous.”¹ That may explain why when we try to define a word simply and precisely we often end up missing significant aspects of the word we’re defining. Attempts at explaining worship as “love,” or “intimacy,” or “relationship” say something true, but end up leaving out more than they contribute to our understanding of worship.

In spite of Erasmus’ warning, over the years I’ve come across numerous definitions of “worship” that have caused me think about worship more biblically.

Harold Best, in his book Music through the Eyes of Faith defines worship in the broadest sense as “acknowledging that someone or something else is greater – worth more – and by consequence, to be obeyed, feared, and adored…Worship is the sign that in giving myself completely to someone or something, I want to be mastered by it.”²

We want to be mastered the objects of our worship. And indeed we are. We worship whatever rules our time, energy, thoughts, longings, and choices. “Those who make them [idols] become like them; so do all who trust in them.” Psa 115:8

A definition of worship that I appreciate for its simplicity and clarity is by Warren Wiersbe, who writes:

“Worship is the believer’s response of all that they are – mind, emotions, will, body – to what God is and says and does.”³

I’ve used that definition, or something similar, when I want to accent that worship can’t be half-hearted, and is all about God’s character, words, and acts.

David Peterson, unpacks what at first blush is a more sterile, but nevertheless insightful, definition: “Worship of the living and true God is essentially an

¹ Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536)
² Harold Best, Music Through the Eyes of Faith, p. 143
³ Warren Wiersbe, Real Worship, p. 26
engagement with him on the terms that he proposes and in the way that he alone makes possible.”

Peterson’s definition highlights God’s initiative, authority, and enabling power in our worship.

Dr. Dan Block, who until recently was a Professor of Old Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, defines true worship as “reverential human acts of submission and homage before the divine Sovereign, in response to his gracious revelation of himself, and in accordance with his will.”

This is the first definition that specifically mentions what many of the biblical words for worship imply – submission and homage.

Here’s one more from William Temple’s (1881-1944) *Readings in St. John’s Gospel*.

“Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His Beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose – and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin.”

**PART 2**

In the first part, I shared some definitions of worship that I’ve found helpful, starting with the general and moving to the more specific. Here are some more that I think do a great job of incorporating what’s important in biblical worship.

First, from Ralph Martin:

---

5 Dr. Dan Block, *For the Glory of God*, course notes
6 William Temple’s (1881-1944), *Readings in St. John’s Gospel*.
“Christian worship, then, is the happy blend of offering to God our Creator and Redeemer through Jesus Christ both what we owe to Him and what we would desire to give Him.”

This is the first definition I’ve mentioned that draws attention to the fact that our worship is offered through Jesus Christ, that God deserves worship as our creator, and that our worship is both a duty and a glad choice.

In a book that is now out of print (as many good books are), Robert Rayburn wrote:

“Worship is the activity of the new life of a believer in which, recognizing the fullness of the Godhead as it is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and His mighty redemptive acts, he seeks by the power of the Holy Spirit to render to the living God the glory, honor, and submission which are His due.”

This is a wonderfully nuanced definition that includes the concepts that worship is an activity of our new nature, cross-centered, and enabled by the power of God’s Spirit. In other words, biblical worship is trinitarian.

This one, by David Nelson, is a little longer, but it includes many of the ideas already mentioned in previous definitions, and is still pretty compact.

“Worship is the human response to the self-revelation of the triune God, which involves: (1) divine initiation in which God graciously reveals himself, his purposes, and will; (2) a spiritual and personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ enabled by the ministry of the Holy Spirit; and (3) a response by the worshiper of joyful adoration, reverence, humility, submission and obedience.”

Finding all these great definitions of worship motivated me to come up with two of my own. Here they are:

---

7 Ralph Martin, Worship in the Early Church, p 17.
8 Robert Rayburn, O Come Let us Worship, p 20.
Christian worship is the response of God’s redeemed people to His self-revelation that exalts God’s glory in Christ in our minds, affections, and wills, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And because I like alliteration at times:

Biblical worship is God’s covenant people recognizing, reveling in, and responding rightly to the glory of God in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Assignment 1:**

In your own words, write your definition of worship
LESSON 2

DEFINING WORSHIP

Here I’ll unpack the first definition of worship.

“Christian worship is the response of God’s redeemed people to His self-revelation that exalts God’s glory in Christ in our minds, affections, and wills, in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Christian worship…is different from every kind of worship because it has been made possible through Jesus Christ. (Rev. 5:9-10)

Is the response…God has already done something outside of us and inside of us that enables us to worship Him. We are not the initiators of worship; God is. (Acts 17:24-31)

Of God’s redeemed people…Just as God delivered the nation of Israel from Egypt to worship Him (Ex 8:1), so He has redeemed us as a holy nation to declare His praises. (1 Pet. 2:9) Worship of God is intended to be corporate, not simply personal.

To his self-revelation…we can’t know God apart from Him revealing Himself to us. He has shown Himself to us in creation, His Word, and ultimately His Son. (Rom. 1:20; Heb. 1:1-4)

That exalts…the essence of worship is exalting – raising up, lifting high, submitting to, magnifying, making much of, honoring, reverencing, celebrating – the triune God. (Ps. 71:19)

God’s glory in Christ…Moses asked God to show him his glory and God passed before him and proclaimed his nature. (Ex. 34:6-7) God has enabled us to see His glory in the face of Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6)

In our minds…worship involves thinking, meditating, reflecting, processing, evaluating, understanding what God has revealed to us of Himself. (Rom. 12:1-2; Ps. 111:2)

Affections…true worship involves the heart as well as the head. We worship what we love and value the most. (Mt. 22:37-38)
And wills...If we are truly worshipping God, we will truly be transformed. (2 Cor. 3:17-18) Our choices will reflect our profession that God is supreme in our lives. (Rom. 12:1-2)

In the power of the Holy Spirit...We are those who worship by the Spirit of God, (Phil. 3:3) and depend on His leading and enabling.

All this to say that when we talk about worshipping God, we’re communicating something of profound significance that should humble and amaze us. Perhaps if we spoke of “worship” in a more biblical way, “worship wars” might be nonexistent. Now wouldn’t that be something to worship God for?

Biblical Worship

I’d like to unpack one more definition of worship today, keeping in mind that we’ll never exhaust the meaning and wonder of worshipping our Creator and Redeemer, even in eternity.

Biblical worship is God’s covenant people recognizing, reveling in, and responding rightly to the glory of God in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Biblical worship...to separate what we do as Christians from all other types of worship. This also implies that God is the One who determines how we should worship Him. (Jn. 4:23-24)

Is God’s covenant people...God’s plan from the beginning of creation has been to redeem a people for his own possession who would give him glory endlessly. The basis of our relationship with Him is His unchanging character, His unfailing love, and His unrepeatable sacrifice for our sins. (Ex. 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:9-10; Rev. 5:9-10)

Recognizing...This implies mental awareness and perception, as opposed to a highly individualized emotional encounter. (Ex. 34:6-7; Jer. 9:23-24)

Reveling in...One of the definitions for “revel” is “to get great pleasure from.” It is in that sense that we “revel” in God’s glory in Christ. When we find our highest joy, pleasure, satisfaction, and good in knowing God, we are worshipping Him. Although worshipping God involves more than our emotions, it doesn’t involve less. (Ps. 32:11, 37:4; 1 Pet. 1:8-9)
And responding rightly…There are countless wrong ways to respond to God, including ungratefulness, anger, and idolatry. Our right responses include both adoration and action, both what we do in specific meetings as well as in all of life. (Rom. 12:1-2; Heb. 10:24-25; Heb. 13:15-16)

To God’s glory in Christ…We have been saved to see that God’s glory has been most clearly revealed in the person and work of His Son. (2 Cor. 4:6) This is a precious truth that we must proclaim and protect. (Heb. 1:1-3)

In the power of the Holy Spirit…While they may disagree on the application, Charismatics and cessationists can both affirm that the worship of God is impossible apart from the power of God’s Spirit. (Jn. 4:23-24; Eph. 2:18)

Why Define Worship?

Why spend time defining worship? Is it really that big a deal? Isn’t it more important that we simply do it?

It’s hard for us to know whether or not we’re doing something if we’re not sure what that “something” is. If I define “eating” as simply looking at food, you wouldn’t enjoy coming over to my house to “eat.” If “breathing” is something I only do when I get with a group of people on Sunday mornings, then how do I describe what I do the rest of the time?

I heard theologian David Peterson say that defining words is important because not only do we use words, but words use us. That’s true, even if we’re unaware of it. Once we assign meaning to a word, it both reflects and shapes our world view. That’s why conversations about evangelicalism, the emerging church, or even Christianity can be confusing. We have to agree on what those words actually MEAN.

“Worship” is another one of those words. When someone refers to worship, they can be talking about any number of things: a time of singing, a meeting, a style of music, a certain type of religious liturgy, a mystical experience, something in contrast to “praise,” or a type of Christian band.

Do any of these comments sound familiar?
“By the third song, I was really worshipping.” [Who or what were you worshipping before the third song?]

“Worship gets me to the place where I don’t have to think about anything.” [Worshipping God actually requires thinking very clearly about the Word, works, and worthiness of God.]

“Will there be worship at the meeting?” [Definitely. The question is of who or what.]

“With only 20 minutes, we really didn’t have time to worship.” [As though we “warm up” to worship God, rather than seek to honor him with our every thought and action.]

“Fred is doing the worship this morning.” [Hopefully, everyone else will join in.]

“I really love your worship.” [This is a comment I sometimes get after leading God’s praise in song. I usually respond by saying, “I hope you worshipped too!”]

“Susie’s a real worshipper!” [This probably means that Susie is physically expressive when she sings songs of praise to God. Whether that means she’s a worshipper of God or not requires a little more information.]

**Assignment 2:**

In your own words, rewrite your definition of worship
LESSON 3

THE LEADER: PART 1

The Important Things

“Worship matters, it matters to God because He is the one ultimately worthy of all worship. It matters to us because worshipping God is the reason for which we were created. And it matters to every worship leader, because we have no greater privilege than leading others to encounter the greatness of God. That’s why it is so important to think carefully about what we do and why we do it.” (P. 19)

1. Has worship ever seemed empty, dry, or pointless? Can you identify some causes? What is the remedy?

2. What may God have been trying to teach you?

My Heart: What Do I Love?

“What’s the greatest challenge you face as a worship leader? You might think it’s deciding which songs to sing, getting along with your pastor, receiving feedback from your church members, or leading a team of unorganized, independent musicians. Nope. Your greatest challenge is what you yourself bring to the platform each and every Sunday. Your heart.” (P. 21)

Jesus said the greatest commandment is this: “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”

“While it’s simplistic to say that worship is love, it is a fact that what we love the most will determine what we genuinely worship” (P. 25)
1. Before reading the quote below, discuss: What is the greatest challenge you face as a worship leader?

“…far too little has been said about the worship wars going on inside us. Each of us has a battle raging within us over what we love most—God or something else. … We love our idols because we think they’ll provide us the joy that comes from God alone. … I wanted God to be exalted through my life, but another agenda was ruling my heart. I wanted people to approve of me, admire me, applaud me. To be honest, I wanted people to adore me. I had an incessant passion to steal God’s glory.” (P. 21, 24)

2. Isaac Watts said: “The Great God values not the service of men, if the heart be not in it: The Lord sees and judges the heart; he has no regard to outward forms of worship, if there be no inward adoration, if no devout affection be employed therein. It is therefore a matter of infinite importance, to have the whole heart engaged steadfastly for God.”10

Is worshiping with your heart a matter of infinite importance to you?

---

My Mind: What Do I Believe?

“The better (i.e., the more accurately) we know God through His word, the more genuine our worship will be. In fact, the moment we veer from what is true about God, we are engaging in idolatry. Regardless of what we think or feel, there is no authentic worship of God without a right knowledge of God” (P. 28)

1. What is “theology”?

2. Define “doctrine”

3. Why are good theology and sound doctrine important?

“Being moved spiritually is different from being changed spiritually. Music affects and helps us in many ways, but it doesn’t replace truth about God. Music can never by itself help us understand the meaning of God’s self-existence, the nature of the Incarnation, or Christ’s substitutionary atonement. Nor can an instrumental solo tell us how music functions in worshiping God. For that, we need to read our Bibles. And to know what the Bible says, we need theology. Good theology.” (P. 30)

4. What are you reading or watching in your leisure? How are these helping you grow in your knowledge of God?

5. Respond to the following statement: “…the moment we veer from what is true about God, we’re engaging in idolatry.”
6. Compare these two statements:

“Music affects and helps us in many ways, but it doesn’t replace truth about God. Music can never by itself help us understand the meaning of God’s self-existence, the nature of the Incarnation, or Christ’s substitutionary atonement. Nor can an instrumental solo tell us how music functions in worshiping God. For that, we need to read our Bibles. And to know what the Bible says, we need theology. Good theology.” (Bob Kauflin, p 30)

“I think music is the one spiritual force in our lives that we have access to, really. There are so many other spiritual avenues that are closed off to us, and music still has that, is still important, is important for me. It saved my life. It saved my sanity.” (Popular rock artist Sting)
Lesson 4

THE LEADER: PART 2

“While God can work through us in spite of our mistakes, incompetence, and lack of preparation, he commends skill and uses it for His glory. When Moses had to find men to oversee the construction of the tabernacle, he didn’t pass around a sign-up list. He chooses craftsmen whom God has gifted with “skill and intelligence” (Ex. 36:1). When David looked for a Levite to lead singing, he picked Kenaniah “because he was skillful at it” (1 Chronicles 15:22). Under divine inspiration, David wrote that musicians are to “play skillfully on the strings” (Psalm 33:3), and David himself, as king over the people, “guided them with his skillful hands” (Psalm 78:72). In the New Testament, Paul referred to himself as “a skilled master builder” (1 Cor. 3:10).” (P. 34)

My Hands: What Do I Practice?

1. “…leading the church to worship God requires more than a sincere heart and good intentions. It requires skill. And that involves work, time, and preparation.” What Scripture supports such a statement?

2. Four things to remember about skill:

   Skill is a gift from God, for His glory
   Skill must be developed
   Skill doesn’t make worship more acceptable before God
   Skill is not an end in itself.

   Practical:

3. What skills do you need to develop personally, or as a team or band or ministry? What steps can you take to develop them?
4. How can we achieve “undistracting excellence”? Or is “excellence” really just subjective or contextual? In other words, is it possible to do something in your church with undistracting excellence that in another church family would be entirely distracting?

5. Read the following quote:
“[O]ur varied skills should function like the frame around a classic painting. If the frame is too bold or extravagant, we will hardly notice the picture it displays. On the other hand, if the frame is cheap, shabby, or marred, we will wonder why such a masterpiece is surrounded by junk. The right frame complements the picture in all the right ways, directing our eyes to the brilliance of the artist, not to the frame.” (P. 38)

Then consider this quote from Harold Best:

“The sobering thing about so much contemporary Christian music and art—all types, but especially the big-scale stuff, pseudo-symphonic, classicised popular and popularised classics, oversized choirs and instrumental groups, or in their absence, the ever-present taped accompaniment, “excellence” in absentia—the trouble with so much of this is that it pretends so ardently, pushing for something that already exists in finer form. It is gross, large-scale, theme park imitation—unauthentic—hence so prone toward kitschiness. Without possessing an inner sense of indigeneity, so anxious to “be like” so obsessed with overstatement and so lacking humility and meekness, it sends out the worst signals to culture about the meaning of lean, disciplined, and authentic faith.”

6. Can you remember ever substituting your talent, gifting, abilities, and skills for genuine worship flowing from a life of worship?

---

My Life: What Do I Model?

1. What areas of life did Paul highlight in his instruction to Timothy, saying he set an example for Christians? (1 Tim 4:12)

2. Read James 3:8-10 and Matthew 12:36. Now take a few moments, and allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart and bring to mind any sin or patterns of sin in your speech.

3. “It’s not my songs that define my worship; it’s my life… The standard for leading worship isn’t sinless perfection. But there has to be a consistent lifestyle of godliness.” Take another few moments, and ask the Lord in his mercy to reveal any sin in your conduct that you may be cherishing.

4. “Temptation is too great, sin too deceptive, and the world too attractive to think we can live an overcoming life on our own.” Is there someone (of the same sex!) in whom you can confide and confess sin? Are you actively fleeing temptation?

5. Think about this: If your church followed your example of love, what would your church look like?
6. If we are to set an example in faith, and if faith means believing God “exists and ... rewards those who seek him” (Heb 11:6), what are ways we can battle unbelief?

7. The pursuit of holiness and purity is unpopular, and spoken of disparagingly, even among modern Christians, as puritanical. But God wants leaders in the church to be an example of purity. Old Testament ceremonial purification rites were only outward signs of an inward reality. Discuss what does purity means to you? What specific areas of life does a call to purity apply to? (P. 47)

8. The Puritans said we will never have pure motives, but we can have right motives. What is your motive for being in music ministry? Are there any motivations that challenge an undivided heart and single-minded devotion to Christ?

9. Consider, are there any areas of your life, or areas in your ministry, that are not under the Lordship of Christ? (Dress, thoughts, etc...)

LESSON 5

THE TASK

What Does A Worship Leader Do?

There’s no question that the role of the worship leader has been exaggerated in recent decades. Some pastors give 1/3 to 1/2 of their meeting to singing, led by a musician who has little to no theological training. Gordon MacDonald comments, “For many young people choosing a church, worship leaders have become a more important factor than preachers. Mediocre preaching may be tolerated, but an inept worship leader can sink things fast.” In addition, the rise of “worship artists” has intensified the often unhelpful connection between pop music culture and congregational worship.

Ultimately, our worship leader is Jesus. He is the only mediator between God and man, and the perfect man who sings God’s praise in our midst. (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 2:12) He is our high priest who has offered the perfect sacrifice of Himself to insure our entrance into the holy places. (Heb. 10:19-22)

However, in spite of all the pitfalls and abuses, musical leadership is modeled in the Old Testament (1 Chron. 15:22 and many Psalms) and can be an expression of wise pastoral care in the local church. Congregations can be taught, pastored, and led as they sing God’s praise. In fact, a pastor is the ideal candidate for leading congregational singing. But in many churches, that’s just not possible. Pastors are put in the position of finding someone to “lead worship.” But who are they looking for, and what is that person’s function?

While God may relate to us in different ways at different times, He is not hiding from us, waiting to see if we’ll find the right combination to unlock His blessing, power, and presence. Worship in spirit and truth isn’t something we’re waiting to have “happen” to us, but something we give to God. God can at any moment choose to reveal His presence in our midst, but He has identified specific actions and attitudes that glorify Him, and to which He generally responds. Critical words, for example, quench the Spirit, while praise invites His activity and involvement.

13 Gordon MacDonald, To Find a Worship Leader, Leadership Journal, Spring 2002
Every leader of congregational worship will acknowledge that biblical worship is impossible apart from the activity of the Holy Spirit. This is at least part of what Jesus meant when he told the Samaritan woman in John 4 that the Father seeks worshipers who worship Him in spirit and truth. Paul also tells us in Philippians 3:3, “For we are the real circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.” (See also Eph. 2:18, Eph. 5:18-21, and 1 Cor. 12:3, and 2 Cor. 3:18)

1. Imagine that you are planting a church: How important are worship leaders?

2. What do the Scriptures themselves say about worship leaders?

3. Who does according to 1 Tim 2:5 and Heb 10:19-22 is the true worship leader?


5. What is the working definition of a worship leader?

A Faithful Worship Leader…

1. God hasn’t called us to be successful or popular—he’s called us to be what?
2. What does faithfulness in music ministry look like? If “each of us is to be trustworthy with the mysteries of God”, that we’re “called to faithfully proclaim what he’s revealed”, how do we do that in practical terms?

3. Harold Best, wrote “Ministry and fame have become so equated with each other that it is nearly impossible to think of anything but fame if one contemplates a ministry in music”\(^{14}\). Do you resonate with that? Discuss.

4. What does zealous leadership (Rom 12:8) look like in worship?

5. “Every criticism provides a fresh opportunity to examine our motives and actions and to respond as those who have received amazing mercy through the cross.” Can you share such an experience?

6. What is the ultimate goal of faithful leadership?

**Worship Leader Magnifies the Greatness of God…**

1. Psalm 34:3 says, “Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!”

   “Magnifying and cherishing [God’s] greatness is at the heart of biblical worship.” Unlike a microscope, which makes something small seem much bigger, worship leaders are similar to telescopes, which “help people see through the eyes of faith how great God has actually revealed himself to be.”

   So what are some ways worship leaders do this?

2. What dangers await us if we aren’t clear and specific about God’s nature in the songs we sing?

3. John Stott says that “All true worship is a response to the self-revelation of God in Christ and Scripture, and arises from our reflection on who he is and what he has done”\(^\text{15}\). Do you personally, and do we as a music ministry and church have times for such reflection? Is it fostered, or are there ways it is being drowned out by the noise of the world?

4. What are three areas God has manifested Himself and invited us to explore His greatness?

5. Respond to this quote “Worship is the triune God inviting us to share in the fellowship and joy he has known from eternity past. We’ve been chosen to join him in his eternal preoccupation: magnifying his endless glories, perfections, and beauty.”

6. What are some ways the Psalms teach us to express our affections toward God to magnify his greatness?

7. Is there a biblical rationale for singing hymns of aspiration and commitment, such as “I Surrender All”?

8. If it is our responsibility to ensure that worshipers have ample opportunity to magnify God with biblical truth and strong affections, let’s discuss how we are doing at it. Are feelings for God alive? Are they based on and born from encountering the truth from Scripture?
Lesson 6

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

“The gospel is not merely one of many possible themes we can touch on as we come to worship God. It is the central and foundational theme. All our worship originates and is brought into focus at the cross of Jesus Christ. Glorifying in Jesus Christ means glorying in His cross. That doesn’t mean looking at some icon or two pieces of wood nailed together. Nor does it simply that every song we sing has the word cross in it. It has little to do with church gatherings that are more like a funeral than a celebration… It is Christ’s atoning sacrifice for our sins that the New Testament writers continually return to as a main focus both for worship and for life (1 Cor. 2:2; 15:3; 1 Pet 2:24)” (P. 72)

“Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him” John 4:21-23

IN JESUS CHRIST

Jesus was saying that our meeting place with God will no longer be limited to physical structures, geographical locales or specific times. It would no longer require animal sacrifices, levitical priests, or holy places. In a single conversation He relocated the place of worship from the Jerusalem temple to himself.

1. What does it mean to worship in spirit and truth?

2. Why do you need a Savior? What are you being saved from? (P.71)

3. To save us from God’s wrath, Jesus must be our what? How did Jesus become that?
4. What is the most compelling truth that consistently, powerfully, and rightly call forth praises (1 Pet.3:18)? Does this resonate with you? Why do Unitarians or Muslims or Mormons worship? What compels them?

5. Why the cross is crucial to worship (1 John 4:10)?

6. What is the foundational theme of our worship (1 Cor. 2:2; 15:3; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Jn. 4:10)? Why?
   a. For our access to God (Heb. 10:19-22)
   b. For acceptable worship (1 Pet. 2:5)
   c. For God’s glory (2 Cor. 4:6)
   d. For participating in Heaven’s Worship (Rev. 5:9-10)

7. What does Harold Best mean when he says that all of our offerings “are at once humbled and exalted by the strong saving work of Christ”?
   a. Why are our offerings humbled?
   b. Why/How are our offerings exalted?

8. Where is the glory of God displayed most clearly?

9. Why might the hymn “Amazing Grace” be so popular, even among non-Christians?
10. Would Jesus have come to die if you were the only person in the world? Why or why not?

11. For whom did Christ die – you or God? Explain (with Scripture).

**Worship Through the Power of the Holy Spirit**

*What does it mean for a worship leader to be aided and led by the Holy Spirit?*

Charismatics and non-charismatics (or continuationists and cessationists) might disagree on the specifics. At the very least it means that we worship the Holy Spirit as God, the third Person of the Trinity. But it also means that as we gather to worship God, the Holy Spirit fulfills His normal roles of illuminating, helping, strengthening, comforting, leading, making us aware of God’s presence, and revealing Christ and Him crucified.

Practically, I think that means at least three things.

**First** we need to **ask** God to help us by His Spirit as we lead others to worship Him. It’s easy for me to trust that my experience, background, musical skill, preparation, or planning will enable people to worship God rightly. If I feel prepared, I’m confident; if I don’t feel prepared, I’m anxious. But no amount of preparation can replace humble dependence on God’s Spirit to do what only He can do – bring light to darkened hearts and minds. God reminds us in 2Cor. 3:18

> “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit”

In other words, music doesn’t transform us; God’s Spirit working through His Word does. God is honored when we humbly ask His Spirit to work in our hearts as we meet to exalt Him. That’s not to say that God isn’t already present by His Spirit when we gather. We’re just asking Him to make us more deeply aware of both His presence and His activity in our lives.

**Second**, having asked the Holy Spirit to work in our midst, we need to **expect** His involvement. That involves listening for His direction, even if our plan is “air-
tight.” Certainly, we should be listening for the Spirit as we plan for a meeting. I think this is an area we often overlook – prayer during planning. But does the Holy Spirit stop speaking to us when we meet? That’s not the impression we get from the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Despite their excessive esteem of the “spectacular” gifts of the Spirit, Paul never tells the Corinthians to stop expecting the Holy Spirit to reveal God’s presence in various ways during a meeting. Neither should we.

What might the Holy Spirit “say” to us? We might feel led to emphasize a certain line from a song or repeat a verse that draws attention to a relevant theme. The Spirit might bring to mind a particular need or a reason to celebrate. He might direct us to a Scripture we hadn’t previously thought of including. There doesn’t have to be anything mystical or “spooky” about the Holy Spirit leading us in times of corporate praise.

Finally, biblical worship means that we respond to what we sense the Spirit is saying or doing. If we have asked for God’s active presence, and are listening for the Spirit’s leading, it should be evident through our faith-filled obedience that He really is working in our midst. That means that we might spontaneously pray for those parents who have a rebellious older child. Whatever we believe about the availability of the gift of prophecy today, 1 Corinthians 14 implies that we should expect the Spirit to speak to us through spontaneous expressions of encouragement, admonition, and instruction when we gather. How that looks will depend on your theological position, the size of your church, the maturity of your people, and a number of other factors. But certainly, a leader who is committed to honoring God will seek to follow the Spirit’s leading in times of corporate worship. Of course, the end of being led and aided by the Spirit is to bring honor to the Lamb who was slain.

1. Robert Rayburn wrote: “If worshipers are not consciously dependent upon the Holy Spirit, their worship is not truly Christian.” Respond. How often are you “consciously dependent”? How much of our week-to-week worship can be pulled off in the flesh, with no attention – much less, “desperate dependence” – confessed to the Holy Spirit?

16 Robert Rayburn, O Come Let Us Worship, Grand Rapids, 1980, p 22

27 | Page
2. “Trying to lead [worship] without spiritual power is far more serious [than leading without electrical power]. But not normally as obvious.” P 82 Are there ways to know we are not worshiping and leading worship in the power of the Spirit? What makes the Third Person of the Trinity “functionally irrelevant”?


4. What is one of the primary ways we show that we are desperately dependent on God?

5. If one of our goals in worship is to put on display the power of God, and if the Scriptures are correct when they say that it is our weakness, not our sufficiency, that displays his power (2 Cor. 12.9), then practically speaking, how can we be weak in worship without drawing attention to our weakness?

6. One of the indispensable attitudes in the pursuit of God’s presence is an eager expectation of him to reveal his power. Along these lines, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones said, “…it is ultimately what you and I believe about God.” What do you think? Is God’s active presence always a response to right belief? Does Mark 6.1-6 have any relevance to this?

7. What role does the Spirit play in a prelude or a choral anthem?
8. The Holy Spirit is indeed present and at work every time the church gathers. We just need to understand biblically what that means. When people grasp something of God’s glory, the Spirit is at work. When people are convicted of sin, the Spirit is at work. When people receive hope and strength in the midst of a trial, the Spirit is at work. The Spirit may also choose to demonstrate his presence through a prophetic impression, a healing or a heightened awareness of his nearness. Are there others ways we know that God’s Spirit is at work that you can think of?


10. How can we allow room for the Holy Spirit to work?

11. How can we be “humbly responsive” to the work of the Holy Spirit?

12. Can a liturgical church be “Spirit-filled”?

13. If the Spirit stopped empowering our worship, would anyone notice?
Lesson 7

SKILFULLY COMBINING GOD’S WORDS WITH MUSIC

An effective worship leader “skillfully combines biblical truth with music.”

Skillfully. Skill has been defined as the “the ability to do something well.” With all the benefits of the mass outpouring of worship songs in the past decade, there have been some down sides. One is the belief that a sincere heart, a guitar, and a knowledge of three chords qualifies someone to lead worship in a church. Fortunately, more and more churches are realizing that it takes skill to put music and biblical truth together in such a way that people actually worship God rather than the leader, the music, themselves, or other idols. That skill may come from natural gifting, training, or experience; but it’s an important part of what a worship leader does. Combines biblical truth with music.

Leading God’s people in corporate worship isn’t just about truth and it isn’t simply about music. It’s about both. If I had to choose one, obviously, I’d take truth. But God, for some reason, mentions singing over 400 times in his word, including 50 direct commands to sing His praise. He makes it pretty obvious what He wants us to do in Ps. 47:6 “Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!” Worship involves all of life, to be sure. We can worship God when we evangelize, care for our children, serve a neighbor, or obey the traffic laws. But God wants at least some of praise to be musical. Have you ever wondered why? I have. And I’ve realized that if I use music in corporate praise without understanding God’s purpose for it, I’ll be prone to misuse it. Even worse, God won’t be glorified by sincere, but misguided, attempts.

So, what music doesn’t do when we meet to exalt God? It doesn’t reveal God’s presence or bring us closer to God. Only the Holy Spirit and the finished work of our Savior can do that. Harold Best writes: “Christian musicians must be particularly cautious. They can create the impression that God is more present when music is being made than when it is not; that worship is more possible with music than without it; and that God might possibly depend on its presence before appearing.”\footnote{Harold Best, \textit{Music Through the Eyes of Faith}, p. 153} Music doesn’t sanctify or morally change us. Again, that is the work of God’s Spirit working through His word. Music doesn’t preach propositional
truth to us, and has no power to save us. Apart from lyrics or a surrounding context, music is a “truth-less” form of communication. By that I mean that while music affects us in many ways, it can never accurately articulate realities like substitutionary atonement or the relationship of the Father and the Son on its own.

If a skillful worship leader skillfully combines biblical truth and music, what part does music play? Why is God so concerned that we use music to worship Him?

One response comes from Martin Luther. This is a portion of his Forward to Georg Rhau’s *Symphoniae iucundae*, a collection of chorale motets published in 1538:

“Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world. It controls our thoughts, minds, hearts, and spirits…This precious gift has been given to man alone that he might thereby remind himself that God has created man for the express purpose of praising and extolling God. However, when man’s natural musical ability is whetted and polished to the extent that it becomes an art, then do we note with great surprise the great and perfect wisdom of God in music, which is, after all, His product and His gift; we marvel when we hear music in which one voice sings a simple melody, while three, four, or five other voices play and trip lustily around the voice that sings its simple melody and adorn this simple melody wonderfully with artistic musical effects, thus reminding us of a heavenly dance, where all meet in a spirit of friendliness, caress and embrace. A person who gives this some thought and yet does not regard music as a marvelous creation of God, must be a clodhopper indeed and does not deserve to be called a human being; he should be permitted to hear nothing but the braying of asses and the grunting of hogs.”

Not exactly conciliatory, but he makes his point that music matters to God. However, there are a number of details God seems to have left out of Scripture when it comes to music in worship. For instance: How much music is too much? Should music be universal or localized? Should music support elements of the liturgy (e.g., the Gloria) or consist of stand-alone songs? What is the best instrumental accompaniment (if there should be any at all)? What do we mean by the BEST music? Are we speaking theologically, emotionally, pragmatically, aesthetically, or historically? Should songs be grouped together in one portion of

---

18 Martin Luther, part of his Forward to Georg Rhau’s *Symphoniae iucundae*, a collection of chorale motets published in 1538
the meeting, or interspersed with other elements? What is the place of choirs? Of soloists? There have been numerous people throughout history who were convinced God had answered these questions. I don’t think God has been clear as we’d like Him to be. There’s a good reason the canon was completed before recording was invented. Understanding His will in these areas requires wisdom, discernment, patience, and a continual dependence on His Spirit to lead us. What God has been clear on is the primacy of congregational song. The few references to instrumental worship (Ps. 33:2-3, Ps. 150) are far outweighed by the number of Scriptures inviting us to sing God’s praises.

1. “The whole meeting is worship; the whole meeting should be filled with God’s Word and the whole meeting should be characterized by the Spirit’s presence” (p.89). Are there any areas in our regular worship services that are not so characterized? (Announcements, for instance)

2. What is the role of the Spirit in our:
   - Praying?
   - Singing?
   - Preaching?
   - Baptisms?
   - Communion?

3. Is understanding the preached Word an act of the Spirit?

4. “We are what we sing.” Discuss.

5. How is worship “dialogical”, and not just us talking to God? What parts of worship are performed on behalf of God, and what parts by the congregation?
6. What are ways we can ensure a centrality of the Word in our worship?

7. What are some examples of songs that do a good job of setting an example for “combining God’s Word with music to magnify the greatness of God in Jesus Christ”? 
Lesson 8

WORSHIP WITH MUSIC: WHAT KIND?

Why do we sing? Let me suggest three reasons. We sing to remember God’s word. We sing to respond to God’s grace. We sing to reflect God’s glory.

First, we sing to remember God’s Word.

It would be natural to assume that we sing because music affects our emotions. But in congregational worship, music is a servant to words.

From the time Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit, God’s Word has always been central to the worship of God. God’s Ten Words were placed in the center of Israel’s worship. (1 Kings 8:9) The longest book in the Bible is a collection of words set to music. Revivals in Israel’s history revival broke out when God’s Word was remembered and obeyed. In the New Covenant, the living Word of God is both our means of access to God and the object of our worship. Paul instructs us in Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” The stunning hymns of worship in Revelation continue to highlight the importance of words in worshipping God. Singing is meant to be a tool that helps us remember those words – God’s deeds, attributes, promises, and warnings. In Deuteronomy 31, as Israel is about to enter the promised land, God tells Moses to teach Israel a song, so that “when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring).”

We remember what we sing. And there’s nothing more important to remember than God’s Word. The feelings that music produces will fade, but the living and active Word of God will continue to work in our hearts, renew our minds, and strengthen our faith. Gordon Fee has said, “Show me a church’s songs and I’ll show you their theology.” If music is going to help us remember what we sing, we want to be careful that we’re singing biblically faithful lyrics.
Second, we sing to respond to God’s grace.

Colossians 3:16 tells us that we’re to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thankfulness in our hearts to God. God is not interested in mere lip service. It dishonors him. But he’s not looking for raw emotionalism either, that is, seeking emotion for its own sake. We sing to express thankfulness FOR something. That “something” is the word of Christ, which dwells in us richly as we sing. In a sermon on Singing and Making Melody to the Lord, John Piper commented:

“Music and singing are necessary to Christian faith and worship for the simple reason that the realities of God and Christ, creation and salvation, heaven and hell are so great that when they are known truly and felt duly, they demand more than discussion and analysis and description; they demand poetry and song and music. Singing is the Christian’s way of saying: God is so great that thinking will not suffice, there must be deep feeling; and talking will not suffice, there must be singing.”

Worship leaders must teach their people the difference between being moved by music and being moved by the beauty of God’s glory in Christ. “I should think myself in the way of my duty, to raise the affections of my hearers as high as I possibly can, provided they are affected with nothing but truth, and with affections that are not disagreeable to the nature of what they are affected with.”

Third, we sing to reflect God’s glory.

How does singing reflect God’s glory? I can think of at least three ways. First, singing glorifies God by expressing the unity Christ died to bring us. Of course, gathering in the same room at one time expresses unity, as does reciting a creed together. Music both intensifies and demonstrates our appreciation of that unity. I’ve been told on more than one occasion that large “worship events” would bring unity to the Christians in a city. While such events might have some place in encouraging Christians, we need to remember that music expresses, not creates, unity among God’s people. We are one because Christ has destroyed the dividing wall that once separated us, due to our sin. When we don’t understand this, we

---

19 John Piper, a sermon on Singing and Making Melody to the Lord
20 John Piper, quoting Jonathan Edwards in Desiring God, pg. 91
argue over which musical style is going to be the voice that “unites” us. We can’t look to music to do what only the Gospel can do.

Second, singing glorifies God because all three persons of the Trinity sing. In Zephaniah 3:17, the Father exults over us with loud singing. Jesus sings the Father’s praise in the midst of the congregation in Hebrews 2:12 (quoting Psalm 22:22). The immediate result of being filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5 is singing and making melody to the Lord with all our hearts. Our God is a singing God, and we reflect His glorious nature when we lift up our voices to sing His song back to Him.

Third, singing glorifies God because it anticipates, in a faint but genuine way, the song of heaven. When God pulls back the curtain on heaven’s activities, we find that heaven is a very musical place. The living creatures and the elders sing a song in Rev. 5:9 celebrating the Lamb who was slain. They are eventually joined by every creature in heaven and earth. The 144,000 sing a new song before the throne in Rev. 14:1-3. Those who conquered the beast sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb in Rev. 15: 3. Our songs on earth are a sweet foretaste of what is still to come. But at this point, our attempts to worship God with music are limited. We’re hindered by insufficient hours, restricted mental capacity, and physical weakness. We don’t have the time, the mind, or the strength to worship God the way He deserves to be worshiped. But that’s not how it will always be. A day is coming when every limitation will be removed and we will celebrate before the Father and the Lamb in the power of the Spirit for endless ages. Wise leaders seek to prepare God’s people for that time by combining music with biblical truth NOW in a way that feeds our souls with the glories of God and heightens our anticipation for seeing our Savior face to face.

So a wise worship leader isn’t primarily concerned about coming up with the most creative musical arrangements, the best video images, or some engaging personal anecdote. He makes sure that God’s Word is sung, proclaimed, reveled in, preached, explained, and treasured – all so that God Himself might be magnified in our eyes.

1. Does God care whether or not we use music to worship him? What Scripture supports your answer?

3. What are some ways that music helps us in worship?

4. How can we be intentional about helping worshipers focus on the lyrics?

5. Discuss Gordon Fee’s comment: “Show me a church’s songs and I’ll show you their theology.”

6. “At times I’ve chosen not to do a well-known song because I thought the music was more impacting than the lyrics. The catchiness factor surpassed the weightiness factor.” Are there songs in our church’s catalogue that might be just catchy, and not sufficiently weighty?

7. One way we can serve the lyrics with our music is to adjust our musical arrangements and volume. Who is the real worship team when we gather, and how does changing the volume serve them?

8. Think back on your last few worship services. How much time was given to instrumental solos? Was this helpful or not? What purpose did it serve? What are ways we can help worshipers during instrumental breaks (i.e., selahs)?

21 Gordon Fee, Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God, 1996, p 188
9. Discuss the following comment: “God seems to have established an undefined but discernable relationship between music and the way we hear his Word. As best as I can tell, music affects our emotions, which in turn can make us more receptive to, or at least more aware of, the words we sing and hear. We can’t speak dogmatically about this relationship, but neither can we deny it.”

10. “God is too great and the human experience too complex to think that one kind of music will always best express the dynamics of our relationship with a living God” (p.104). Consider and discuss the implications of this statement.

11. Michael Hamilton says, “We need to welcome the experimental creativity that is always searching out new ways of singing the gospel, and banish the fear that grips us when familiar music passes away.” Many people in our churches have lost a lot of the worship music they grew up with – the music that helped them express their godward affections. How do we shepherd them through such loss, and how are we preparing for the day when “our” music is gone? Or do we think we’ll be singing our current favorites 50 years from now?

12. What is the “music center” of your church? What is the signature sound that most effectively edifies the majority of your congregation?

---

Lesson 9

CORPORATE WORSHIP

“God is eager to help us as we prepare, but He wants us to ask Him for that help. We don’t simply plan for meetings; we plan for people. Ask God for songs that will serve those you are leading rather than ones you like or ones that will make you look good. Every person walking in on Sunday morning has unique needs, specific sins he or she is battling, blind spots, and a tendency to forget the gospel. We have the awesome privilege of pointing everyone to the greatness, goodness, and grace of Jesus Christ. We need the holy spirit’s power to be effective, as we’ll never outgrow our need for His help.” (P.111)

Planning Sunday’s songs

1. Describe your worship planning process.

2. What do you think is meant by the phrase, “We don’t simply plan for meetings; we plan for people”?

3. To what extent is our worship planning a community effort? Are we considering everyone of every generation in our planning?

4. What is the unchanging theme of our worship services?

5. Do worshipers in our services clearly understand what they should be focusing on? How can we reinforce or improve on this?
6. “I want to maximize the use of every song” (p.113). How does that resonate with you? Is it ever tempting for you to just get through a song without allowing it to serve its purpose?

7. Are our transitions between elements and portions of the meeting clear? Do the spoken transitions make sense? Are they edifying, or just filler?

8. List a few ideas on how to plan creatively for Sunday’s worship?

9. Review your songs from the last 6 to 12 months, and with your team or pastor answer the questions below:

   - Are we aware of and emphasizing Christ’s finished work each time we sing?
   - Are the lyrics we sing biblically faithful and doctrinally sound?
   - Are we worshipping a triune God in song, seeking to glorify the Father by honoring the Son in the power of the Spirit?

Thereby Motivating the Church

One of the greatest challenges worship leaders face is knowing how to lead people who seem unresponsive or unaffected.

1. What are three important ways that God can use a worship leader to help people connect with him?
2. Why should everyone – including the instrumentalists – on the worship team sing as often as possible?

3. What does it mean to be a “transparent” worshiper?

4. What do you do to help you stay focused on the words you are singing?

5. How should you react if people seem disinterested in worship? Considering the high probability that many people will come to worship hindered in a variety of ways, how can you encourage and “impress on them what God has done in Jesus Christ, what he has promised to do, and what a difference this makes in their lives”?

6. Beyond singing together and enjoying worship, God wants “to knit the fabric of our lives together”

   a. Do you have a biblical perspective on your meetings?

   b. Are you helping people see how they relate to God’s total plan and purpose for his people?

   c. Are you attracting an audience, or are you building a worshiping community?
To Proclaim the Gospel…

1. Are there any songs we sing, or are popular in many churches, that are lean on “proclamation” – declaring what is true about God?

2. If we have been saved “to proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9), are there ways we can know that people are leaving our churches proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ matters? What evidence might there be?

3. If God is using our trials to prepare us for the glory to be revealed in us (Rom 8:18), in what concrete ways can we rejoice in them? Can you share a way you have rejoiced or are rejoicing in a particular trial?

4. How can singing songs together help us become more like Christ? (1 Pet 2:24, 1 Cor 6:20, Phil 1:6, 2 Cor 5:21)

5. Broken relationships: Before we can sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to one another (Col 3:16), we must forgive one another as the Lord has forgiven us (Col 3:13). Does anyone come to mind when you are asked, If God has forgiven us our great sins, how can we not extend mercy to those who have sinned against us? If you are comfortable sharing, feel free.

6. What do you feel like we proclaim in our church? As you have sat under sound, biblical preaching, has the result been a growth in the love and appreciation for the gospel?

7. Is your church a joyful, gospel-centered community that demonstrates and proclaims the good news of God’s grace to a lost and hopeless world? Discuss.
To Cherish God’s Presence…

1. What is the connection between music and God’s presence?

2. If God is omnipresent, why do we sense his presence more profoundly at certain times and places?

3. Psalm 105.4 says, “seek his presence continually.” How can we do that?

4. Is there anywhere that God is not? (cf. Psalm 139.7-8; Apostle’s Creed) What does it mean that God dwells in the praises of his people (Ps 22:3)?

5. Can we find any biblical precedence from the New Testament that records an unexpected encounter with the localized presence of God similar to that of Moses’? Should such an encounter be the norm in the Christian life today?

6. What are some qualities that might accompany the special awareness of God’s presence?

7. What is it that brings us into the special awareness of God’s presence?

8. Question 1 asks, what’s the connection between music and God’s presence? Now what about the difference?
If one of the Spirit’s “primary purposes in the new covenant age is to manifest the presence of God, to give indications that make the presence of God known” (Grudem), can you point to times in your walk with Christ that confirms this?

9. Do you “earnestly desire” the gifts of the Spirit? (1 Cor: 14.1)

10. How do you see the Spirit giving manifestations of his presence for “the common good” at your church?

**And To Live For God’s Glory**

1. What does 2 Cor. 3:18 suggest as a primary reason for gathering?

2. Some ways that worshiping God should transform us:
   a. Biblical worship should humble us
   b. Biblical worship should make us secure
   c. Biblical worship should make us grateful
   d. Biblical worship should make us holy
   e. Biblical worship should make us mission minded

3. Can you point to evidence in your life and the lives of those around you that, through a steady diet of biblical worship, worshipers in your church are transforming into his image as you behold his glory? Discuss this and encourage one another with the evidence you see!
LESSON 10

HEALTHY TENSIONS

Guiding Principles

1. “…every generation and church is responsible to weigh its practices and traditions against the unchanging authority of God’s Word…” (p.154). Consider this comment and spend some time thinking about your church’s worship pattern and practices (your “liturgy”). Talk about what might change in the coming years. Whether or not it’s good, what can you identify as just tradition?

2. “Whether a tradition is three hundred, thirty, or three years old, the danger is the same. We start with Scripture but eventually invest ultimate authority in our own traditions or views” Discuss

3. What are three principles that churches adhere to govern their worship practices? (Two are formal, arising out of the Reformation.) What principles govern your church’s worship?

4. Do you allow room for evaluating everything in worship to see if you can do it better?

Transcendent And Immanent

1. Many times in Scripture when we see someone encounter God, they are immediately aware of the holiness of God and their sin – the net result being worship characterized with reverence and awe. We are also instructed in Heb 12 to worship in such a manner. Discuss what worshiping with reverence and awe looks like. What songs help such worship?
2. God is also immanent—near. There is not only gravity on Sunday morning, but gladness; not just trembling, but rejoicing (p.162). What corporate songs of worship capture both God’s total otherness and his nearness? His transcendence and his immanence?

3. “There are a number of ways to keep God’s transcendence and immanence in healthy tension. One option is to recognize that different services can reflect different themes. One Sunday might focus on God’s greatness, while another might focus more on His immanence…The best way to maintain this tension is to continually meditate on the gospel. God’s transcendence, holiness and justice require the sacrifice of the Son of God to be satisfied. At Calvary we stand on awe of perfect righteousness, holy justice, and unerring judgment. We can offer no excuse or justification for our sin. We are completely at the mercy of our sovereign Creator and King.” (p.162)

Meditate on what Bob says is the best way to maintain the healthy tension of God’s transcendence and immanence

Head and Heart

1. Based on Psalm 32:11, if “we fail to demonstrate delight and satisfaction in God, we’re not only dishonoring God, we’re disobeying him” (p.167). How does that strike you?

2. Does Psalm 32:11 require us to shout for joy? Is it a command or an exhortation? What’s the difference?

3. Respond to the assertion that it’s our duty as worship leaders, as Jonathan Edwards said was his own duty, to “raise the affection of my hearers as
high as I possibly can, provided they are affected with nothing but truth…”\textsuperscript{23}

4. The church tends “to favor devotion over doctrine,” and that this “needs to be reversed.” If this is true, why do you think so? And do you agree that doctrine should be favored before devotion, “without losing either”? Why?

\textbf{Internal and External}

1. Reconcile a) that failing to demonstrate delight and satisfaction in God surmounts to being sinful (p.167), and b) that we can never know if someone is a true worshiper by observing them from the outside.

2. Is there any physical expression of worship that God has given us in Scripture that I’ve never displayed? And if so, why?

3. Hypothetically, if you are worshiping in a church where there is no physical expression and you want to lift your hands, shout, dance, kneel, etc., what do you do? Is it an act of obedience to the Scripture’s exhortations to follow through and be demonstrative in your Godward affections, or are there other, higher concerns that take precedence?

\textbf{Vertical and Horizontal}

1. According to Ephesians 1:3-6; 2:18, why did God create the word?

2. What does acceptable worship depend on?

3. Why does God command us to worship him? Give 2 reasons:

4. Discuss this paragraph: “Worship is God’s gift of grace to us before it’s our offering to God. We simply benefit from the perfect offering of the Son to the Father through the power of the Spirit (Ephesians 2:18). Worship is our humble, constant, appropriate, glad response to God’s self-revelation and his enabling invitation. Apart from this perspective, leading worship can become self-motivated and self-exalting. We can become burdened by the responsibility to lead others and can think that we might not be able to deliver the goods. We subtly take pride in our worship, our singing, our playing, our planning, our performance, our leadership. Ultimately we separate ourselves from the God who drew us to worship him in the first place”.

5. How is encouraging and edifying one another a legitimate form of worship? (Hint: Heb 10:24-35, WM p.178)

6. How might we edify one another in worship?

**Planned and Spontaneous**

1. What are the benefits of planning well for worship? What do you need to watch out for?
2. What are your weekly worship planning habits?

3. How do you treat your plans? As final? As suggestions? How tied do you feel to them as a team?

4. Does the worship team expect and respect any veering from the plans? Have they been sufficiently, patiently and pastorally trained on how to allow for change from plans? In other words, is it clearly a leading of the Holy Spirit, or might it be seen as just a musical decision?

5. “We have God’s Word, four or five songs, and thirty minutes to help them see that God is bigger than their problems and that Jesus Christ is a magnificent Savior.” How does that impact you and your planning?

6. Do you feel chained to the music? What are ways you as a team can free yourselves to lead with Spirit-driven spontaneity? What does such spontaneity win for you and your church?

7. Discuss ways you can grow in spontaneity.

Rooted and Relevant

1. What are the benefits of singing hymns and practicing liturgical forms from the past?
2. Might there be anything in your church that was a “Spirit-inspired practice of a previous generation” that is now only a “dead, unexamined practice”? Is anything in your service prohibiting people from seeing Jesus?

3. What are some of the hidden dangers in pursuing relevance?

4. Os Guiness says: “by our determined efforts to redefine ourselves in ways that are more compelling to the modern world than are faithful to Christ, we have lost not only our identity but our authority and our relevance”\(^{24}\). Give some thought and discuss what ways he might be referring to that are more compelling to the world than are faithful to Christ.

5. Flipping question two on its head, are there ways your church, in attempts to become more relevant, has unintentionally set up unnecessary boundaries to encountering Christ?

6. Consider the ways your church has sought or is planning to seek to be relevant. Evaluate what are the theological bases, the underlying motives, and the consequences of this decision.

Skilled and Authentic

1. How important is musical skill and excellence in worship? What role does excellence play in worship?

2. How does Reggie Kidd’s comment resonate with you, that “There will always be a flat tenor, a broken guitar string, and overly loud organ, or a poorly placed hymn. But it’s okay. The cross means it’s covered.”? Is that a godly attitude, or does it sound flippant? Is this your default attitude when something goes wrong in worship?

3. “Assuming I have sufficient skill, do I have to sacrifice my worship of God in order to facilitate the worship of others? No. The only thing I have to sacrifice is my narrow understanding of what worship is.” What does this mean to you?

4. What are your music ministry’s qualifications for membership?

5. How would you define Excellence?

Worship For the Church and for Unbelievers

1. “If our congregation is not growing in grace and godliness, our demonstration of the gospel is out of step with our declaration” (p.201). What’s your response to that?

2. “The first priority of our Sunday meetings is strengthening the church.” And that, “as leaders our job is to support our pastor in his role of insuring that the church is growing in maturity.” Is that a new realization to you? Is it convicting or reaffirming? Does such a statement demand any adjustment to your present thinking or philosophy of worship? How does it shift your priorities?
3. Discuss how the presence of non-Christians in your worship service changes your leadership, if at all?

4. What are some ways that God will faithfully use to affect unbelievers in our worship?

5. Discuss the implications of D.A. Carson’s quote that “without the repeated, passionate, Spirit-anointed proclamation of ‘Jesus Christ and him crucified’ we may be winning more adherents than converts”\(^25\)?

**Worship in Events and Everyday**

1. “Biblically speaking, there is no sacred/secular distinction in our lives” (p.207). Spend some time responding to this claim.

2. If all of life is an act of worship, why is it important to gathering with other believers to worship corporately?

3. Respond and wrestle with the following quote “God has so designed the church that it’s impossible to grow in godliness and know the fullness of his grace apart from the church”

4. How can God receive greater glory than he already has intrinsically?

5. How important is it to connect the event of Sunday worship with the rest of the week? What are ways we can do that?

LESSON 11

RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS

Always People:

In Romans 15:5-6 we read “May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. How are you learning to relate to other Christians for God’s glory? Perhaps share some trials that have helped you grow in Christian love. Any conflicts that God has used for your sanctification?

2. In your relationship with your church, your team, and your pastor, is there an invitation to work through relational obstacles?

3. Why is it important to work with others?

4. How much of your time is devoted to the musical side of worship ministry, and how much to the relational?

Your Church:

1. “Being a worship leader is more about leading people than leading songs.” How does that strike you?
2. Discuss the importance and benefits of praying for your church, and some ways you as a team can increase your faithfulness in this privilege and discipline.

3. How do you receive compliments? What are practical ways to receive praise better?

4. What about criticism? Are you praying for correction? How are you at handling it, no matter how poorly it is delivered?

5. Alfred Poirier wrote “in light of God’s judgment and justification of the sinner in the cross of Christ, we can begin to discover how to deal with any and all criticism. By agreeing with God’s criticism of me in Christ’s cross, I can face any criticism man may lay against me. In other words, no one can criticize me more than the cross has.”26. Do you actively, consciously agree with God’s criticism of you in Christ’s cross? How might this change your perspective on criticism?

6. Many people might say that Bob thinks too much about song choice. If some song has accompanied a brother or sister’s meaningful encounter with God, or if it’s getting a lot of play time on Christian radio, shouldn’t that be enough to begin singing it corporately? Respond. What are the filters you use to choose songs for corporate worship?

---

What changes has your church experienced in the last decade? How were they received? Looking back, how would you do them differently? What are some principles Bob recommends for leading a church through change?

7. Do you love your church? How can they tell?

Your Team:

1. Does everyone on your worship team have and know their role and responsibility, beyond their musical contribution?

2. Does everyone know the standards and requirements for participating on the worship team?

3. When you think of the members of your team, what comes to mind? Problems or joys? Pain or pleasure? “Whatever’s in your heart will be revealed in your words and actions” (p.233). Do you have experiences that affirm this?

4. If it’s true that “…everyone will know what’s most important by what we bring to their attention most often” (p.233), what would your worship team say is most important?

5. How are you encouraging your team?

6. Is your worship team or music ministry growing theologically? How do you know? How are you helping in this endeavor?
7. Is there consistent, gracious and clear evaluation of your services? How is it accomplished?

8. “…godly attitude is more important…than great musicianship” (p.238). Is there accountability in your music ministry to ensure that members are pursuing godly character? How so?

9. How are you preparing current team members for the possibility of being replaced?

10. Can your church’s worship music ministry be characterized as a culture of joy?