

# WE COME HERE TO WORSHIP

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. STRATEGIC OVERVIEW OF CHURCH

1. **Who—Identity:** Collectively—Body of Christ  
Individually—God’s children
2. **Why—Purpose:** Please God—Love God, and love neighbor
3. **What—Mission:** Make disciples
4. **Vision:** Where/when God wants us to act  
Links purpose and mission—to—how we accomplish them
5. **How:** Goals/methods/resources—for fulfilling vision/mission/purpose

### B. OBEDIENT ACTIONS LINK PURPOSE TO MISSION

1. Basic actions that **fulfill** our **purpose**
  - Show our love for God and our neighbor
  - Have **intrinsic value**—fulfill our reasons for existence
2. Basic actions that **accomplish** our **mission**
  - Produce **external results**
  - Make us more effective **disciples** and **disciple-makers**

### 3. Five Basic Actions—Functions of the Church

- WORSHIP
- TEACH/DISCIPLE
- SERVE
- WITNESS
- GIVE

### C. GOING BEYOND MERE ‘ACTION’

1. TRANSFORMATIONAL BEHAVIORS—show we are **new creatures** in Christ

- Worship—no longer **devoted** to self—but to God and others
- Teach—not just **worldly wise**—but knowing and showing others how to follow Christ
- Serve—no longer **self-serving**—but pleasing God by helping others
- Witness—no longer just **aimless seekers**—but fervent proclaimers of faith
- Give—no longer just **receivers**—but giving freely

2. MEANINGFUL EXPRESSIONS—show our identity (who we are)—not just ‘things’ we do

- Not just ‘**doing** worship’—but *being worshippers* who **are** devoted to God
- Not just **teaching** classes—but *being disciples* who **are** Christ-followers
- Not just **servicing** causes—but *being servants* who **are** humble and **care** for people
- Not just **growing** churches—but *being witnesses* who **are** salt and light
- Not just **giving** money—but *being investors* of all we **are**—heart, soul, mind, strength

3. SPIRITUAL HABITS—ingrained and integrated into all of life

a. Seamless connection—between Sunday and weekdays

- ✦ Not just periodic ‘activities’—but lifestyle attitudes and actions
- ✦ All life is sacred—our pathways into ‘secular’ life are ordained of God
- ✦ Seamless connection between what we do here—and how we live there

b. Integrated relationship—between all five functions

- ✦ They all support one another—and affect one another
- ✦ The church depends on them all—and is *dysfunctional* if one is missing
- ✦ How we view one function affects how we behave in all other areas

Examples:

“**Enter to worship; depart to serve**”—also—“**Enter to serve; depart to worship**”

**There can be no ‘ministry’ without supportive ‘giving’**

**Effective witness relies on good teaching; but learning without witness is pure vanity**

**D. THE KEY ROLE OF WORSHIP**

1. Worship = **not** just an ‘activity’ but a *lifestyle* of pleasing God
2. **Individual behavior** should flow from worship—to please God

a. **Rom 12:1-2**

- ✦ We present ourselves entirely to Him as living sacrifices
- ✦ This is our **spiritual service of worship**

b. **II Cor 5:9**

- ✦ This is our whole ambition—to be pleasing to God

3. **Church functions**—should be driven by this desire to please God—by:

- How we ‘worship’—‘here’ and ‘there’
- What we teach
- How we serve/minister
- How we witness/proclaim
- How—and how much—we give

## II. WHAT IS WORSHIP

### A. PAGAN BACKGROUND

1. Emphasis on worship

- Pagans—very ‘**religious**’ people
- Driven by **fear** of gods—who had to be appeased
- Placated gods by showing **piety**—[not humility or holiness]—but fulfilling **duty** to gods
- ‘Worship’ was—performing **formal public acts** to satisfy the gods

2. Elements of worship

- **Invocation**—incantations lured gods into people’s presence
- **Rituals**—superstitious acts showed obedience that pleased gods
- **Sacrifice**—done to placate/appease gods’ anger
- **Offerings**—presenting gods things they needed
- **Vows**—promises for divine favor—that had to be fulfilled when gods answered

3. Nature of worship

- **Ritualistic**—precise and formal actions following prescribed formulas
- **Sacramental**—tangible exchange of gifts—both ways—fulfilling divine-human contract
- **Sacerdotal**—priests were intercessors and givers of holy things

- **Reciprocal**—gods needed people as much as they needed the gods
- **Manipulative**—people tried to force gods to do their will
- **Capricious**—gods were unreliable—acted according to unpredictable whim

## B. JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

### 1. Language—all **relational** terms

a. HEBREW = *shachah* = **bow** [press] down

- ✦ Lay down before the royalty of God
- ✦ With an attitude of humility
- ✦ Give reverence and respect to awesomeness
- ✦ Give total obedience to

b. GREEK = *proskuneo* = to lay **prostrate** [crouch as a dog kissing master's hand]

- ✦ Humble oneself before another
- ✦ Revere and adore

c. ENGLISH = acknowledge the quality of **worthiness**

- ✦ Revere and honor
- ✦ Adore—absolutely devoted to
- ✦ Prepared to obey

d. SUMMARY

- ✦ **Voluntary** act of **devotion** to one **worthy** of admiration by one in **humble adoration**

### 2. Meaning:

- God is omnipotent—transcendent—perfectly holy—and worthy of ‘fear’.
- We do stand riveted in awe of His majesty—purity—almightiness.
- But we worship Him **because He is worthy**--in person and action.
- Not prompted by power, coercion, or fear—but by **awe, love** and **respect**.
- An act of trust—because He is trustworthy and reliable—and has proved His love for us.
- He deserves **meaningful** devotion—not mindless, repetitive, formal or superstitious rituals
- Worship is **responsible** and **accountable**—gratitude for His grace demands obedient action
- He invokes our presence—not vice-versa—and calls us to obedient response
- He reveals Himself and calls us to the privilege of worship—just as He did with Isaiah.

### III. HOW WE SHOULD WORSHIP

#### A. FOUR PHASES OF WORSHIP

##### 1. REVELATION AND ADORATION—vv 1-4

- God reveals—vv1-4
- This calls for adoration—v3

*1 In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. 2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." 4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.*

##### 2. CONFESSION AND SUPPLICATION—v5

- We confess unworthiness—v 5
- We ask forgiveness—implied in v5

*5 Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."*

##### 3. CONSECRATION, FORGIVENESS AND PROCLAMATION—vv6-7

- God cleanses and separates us—makes us useful—vv6-7a
- God forgives and renews us—v 7b
- God seals this by public proclamation—v 7b

*6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. 7 He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."*

##### 3. CALL, SUBMISSION AND COMMISSION—vv 8-9

- God calls us to service—v8a
- We submit—v8a
- God commissions and sends us to act—v9a

*8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?"*

*Then I said, “Here am I. Send me!” 9 He said, “Go, and tell this people:*

## **B. FURTHER GUIDELINES: BIBLICAL WORSHIP**

### 1. In the Old Testament

- Involved joy and singing in the presence of God
- Always cost the worshipper something—sacrifice
- Focused on God’s character—not on the human action
  - ❖ His holiness and transcendence
  - ❖ His love and immanence

### 2. In the New Testament

- Is Trinitarian—given to all Three Persons—as worthy of worship
  - ❖ Is Christ-centered
  - ❖ Is energized by the Holy Spirit
  - ❖ Glorifies the Father
- Is done by the Priesthood of all Believers—not sacerdotal—all participating
- A presentation by the people to God as the audience—not to/for the people

### **EXAMPLE: Kierkegaard's description of worship**

## **IV. WHAT IS GENUINE WORSHIP?**

### **A. JESUS’ ANSWER—TO THE SAMARITAN WOMAN—Jn 4:19-24**

*19 “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” 22 “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”*

### **B. GENUINE WORSHIP SHOULD NOT DETERMINED MAINLY BY:**

- Different **social** contexts
- Different **atmospheres** or **settings**—urban, rural, suburban

- Different **theologies**--conservative, liberal, fundamentalist, moderate
- Different **emotional needs**
- Different **styles**--liturgical, traditional, contemporary
- Different **conditions** around us—poor/rich, cathedral/hut

**Remember:**

God is always present—everywhere we go  
So we should worship Him in every situation

**Psalm 139**

**7** Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? **8** If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. **9** If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, **10** Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. **11** If I say, “Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night,”

**12** Even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike *to You*. **17** How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! **18** If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. When I awake, I am still with You.

**23** Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; **24** And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.

**C. GENUINE WORSHIP DEPENDS ON:**

- **God's** presence—and He is always there!
- Our **awareness** of Him
- Our realizing our **need** for God
- How we **relate to Him**--not to anything or anyone else

EX: Woman let down after hearing Ebenezer Erskine 2nd time:  
"Dear lady, you came to hear me, not God."

EX: Minister supplying for Henry Ward Beecher:  
"Those who came to worship Beecher may now leave, whoever came to worship God keep your seats."

EX: **Acts 14:8-18**—Paul and Barnabas at Lystra :  
The crowd wanted to worship them as gods:

Barnabas as Zeus; Paul as Hermes, the spokesman

### APPLICATION

- ❖ Danger of making ministers and programs into idols
- ❖ Worldly distractions—deflect our adoration from God

## D. GENUINE WORSHIP—ISAIAH 6

### Verses 1-4

REVELATION	God is always the object of worship
ADORATION	We must always praise and honor Him

### Verse 5

CONFESSION	Acknowledge our sinfulness
SUPPLICATION	Ask forgiveness

### Verses 6-7

REDEMPTION	God reclaims and renews us
CONSECRATION	God cleanses and sets us apart for His service
PROCLAMATION	God affirms our salvation by His Word
THANKSGIVING	We respond with grateful hearts

### Verses 8-9

CALL	God challenges us to tell the good news
SUBMISSION	We surrender to His service
COMMISSION	God sends us—and we obey!

## E. POWERFUL WORSHIP

### 1. Anticipates God's **Revelation**

- **Faith**—really believes God will 'show up'
- **Prayer**—asks God to reveal Himself and His will
- Fully **focused** on God's presence
- Fully **invested**—attuned with our whole being

- ❖ Isaiah **saw** the Lord--v1
- ❖ He **heard** the seraph--v3

- ❖ He **felt** the vibrations--v4
- ❖ He **smelt** the smoke--v4
- ❖ He **tasted** the coals of holiness--v7

## 2. **Relies** on the **Holy Spirit** [inspiration and power]

- Not mechanical predictability or human conventions
- Not pre-occupied with form—but on substance
- Expects God not *just* to ‘show up’—but also to act!
- Is fearful—knowing God expects *us* to take action!
- Is uncomfortable—knowing God may take us beyond human horizons!

## 3. **Engages** God’s **Supernaturality**

- **Enter** into the presence of perfect holiness—Holy, Holy, Holy!
- **Bow** before the all-powerful and transcendent Holy Other!
- **Affirm** our Creator and Sustainer can do mighty and miraculous things!
- **Confess** our unworthiness and impotence—“Woe to me—for I am ruined!”
- **Trust** Him to do the impossible: to forgive—to restore—and to use us for His purpose
- **Respond** by doing whatever He calls us to do—joining His supernatural kingdom work

**We enter to serve by worshiping Him—we depart to worship by serving Him**