

The Dearest Place on Earth (11)

A Worshipping Community

A. Introduction

1. The local church is a community of God's people.
2. What kind of community should we be?

When people look at this local church what should they see?

3. First of all, they should see a worshipping community.

B. What is worship?

1. Worship is... (defining worship).

"Worship... acknowledging that someone or something else is above us and worthy of our affection, attention and adoration." (Bob Kauflin)

In the Bible the word 'worship' is used to describe: bowing down, expressing homage; serving; respect or reverence shown to God; adoration offered to God

Worship = Recognising God + Right Heart Response.

"Worship involves both attitude (awe, reverence, respect) and actions (bowing, praising, serving)... Worship is the believers' response of all that they are – mind, emotions, will and body – to what God is and says and does." (Warren Wiersbe)

"Worship of the living and true God is essentially an engagement with him on the terms that he proposes and in the way that he alone makes possible." (David Peterson)

2. Worship is what we were created to do.

"What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever."

"Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth — everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." (Isaiah 43:6-7)

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." (Revelation 4:11)

If we don't worship God we will worship something else.

"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen." (Romans 1:21-25)

3. Worship is what we were saved to do.

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." (Romans 12:1)

"God created us to worship... God saved us to worship... it is our natural duty as creatures and joyful duty as Christians to worship... our worship is a response of gratitude for saving grace... those with new hearts long to hear his word and express devotion." (John Piper)

C. Does God care about how we worship?

1. We are not free to worship God any way we please.

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments." (Exodus 20:4-6)

"You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: 'These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'" (Matthew 15:7-9)

See also Paul's directives to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 14.

Getting your worship wrong is a serious matter.

"In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast." (Genesis 4:3-5)

"Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD." (Leviticus 10:1-2)

2. God is seeking true worshippers.

"But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word." (Isaiah 66:2)

Those who are humbled by God's greatness, majesty and holiness.

Those who recognise how utterly helpless they are and how they are unable to save themselves from God's wrath, and therefore dependent upon His grace.

Those who are eager to obey God's Word.

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24)

To worship in spirit means that true worship is impossible without the Holy Spirit. The Spirit helps us to see the truth about Jesus and helps us to respond rightly to the truth about Jesus.

To worship in truth means that true worship is a response to truth, it flows out of an understanding of who God is and what He has done for us. Jesus is the truth – He is the one who shows us what God is really like, and the truth about Jesus is found in God's Word.

3. God has told us in the Bible how we should worship Him.

"To worship God we must know who God is, but we cannot know who God is unless God first chooses to reveal himself to us. God has done this in the Bible, which is why the Bible and the teaching of the Bible need to be central in our worship." (James Montgomery Boice)

D. All of life is worship but public worship is better than private worship

1. All of life is worship.

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you

will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:1-2)

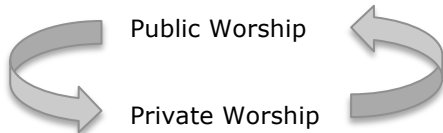
2. But public worship is better than private worship. Why?

It's more like the worship of heaven – the Book of Revelation reveals only congregational worship.

It's more edifying than private worship.

It declares God's glory more widely than private worship.

2. Private worship is still important.



Our public worship flows out of our private worship and our public worship flows back into our private worship.

"If you will not worship God seven days a week, you do not worship Him on one day a week." (Don Whitney)

E. Worshipping Together

1. Why do we worship together?

"To gather with God's people on the Lord's Day to worship at God's throne under the authority of God's word is our solemn duty and joyful privilege." (Kevin DeYoung)

We gather to behold... to rehearse (the gospel)... to hear... to be commissioned.

"We come to be impressed by God and his mighty acts of salvation. We come to sing of who he is and what he's done. We come to hear his voice resounding in and through his Word. We come to feel the grief of our sin so that we can taste the glory of his salvation. We gather to be magnificently defeated, flattened, and shrunk by the power and might of the living God." (Tullian Tchividjian)

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:1-8)

"Worship services ought to inform the mind intellectually, engage the heart emotionally, and bend the will volitionally." (Tullian Tchividjian)

Mind response: "I have seen the King"

Heart response: "I am undone"

Will response: "Here I am, send me"

We gather to edify by our presence and by our participation (see 1 Corinthians 14).

2. How do we worship together?

The Regulative Principle states that everything we do to worship God must be clearly warranted by Scripture either by being an explicit command or a necessary implication of what the Bible teaches.

The Regulative Principle can be summed up as "Read the Bible, Preach the Bible, Pray the Bible, Sing the Bible, See the Bible."

We need to distinguish between the substance of worship and the circumstance of worship.

Substance: Things that God has told us to do.

Read the Bible.

"Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture." (1 Timothy 4:13)

Preach the Bible.

"Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction." (2 Timothy 4:2)

Pray the Bible.

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone." (1 Timothy 2:1)

Sing the Bible.

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." (Ephesians 5:19)

See the Bible.

"Do this in remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11:24, 25)

Circumstance: Time of service, length of service, where to meet, what to wear, hymn books or projection, type of musical accompaniment etc.

3. What happens when we worship together?

God is glorified; Believers are edified; The watching world is witnessed to.

4. How have those before us structured their services?

"Church leaders designed their orders of worship to communicate the truths of Scripture, touch the hearts of worshippers with the implications of those truths, and then equip believers to live faithfully in response."

Bryan Chapell in *Christ-Centered Worship* notes that the liturgies of the church in Rome (pre-1570), Luther, Calvin, and Westminster follow a pattern of:

Adoration (recognising the greatness and goodness of God).

Confession (an awareness of who we are).

Thanksgiving (for God's mercy)

Petition (having thanked God for his grace, a desire to see more of it in our lives and lives of others).

Instruction (to know how to express more love for Him, His creation and His creatures).

Charge and blessing.

F. Conclusion

"Worship has ONE object (the triune God), TWO contexts (all of life, gathered church), and THREE audiences (God, the gathered church, the watching world)." (Mike Cosper)

Appendix: How do I go about planning a morning service?

1. As I prepare to lead I have three words in my mind: GOD, GOSPEL, WORD.

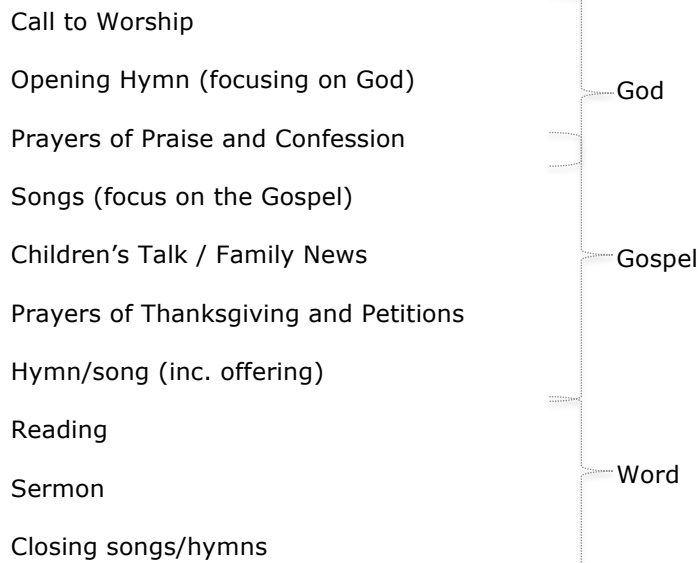
"But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word." (Isaiah 66:2)

God: The first part of the service I want to encourage people to lift their eyes to GOD – through readings, reflections, songs, prayers that focus on God’s character and God’s actions.

Gospel: The next part of the service I want people to be reminded of the GOSPEL. There are two aspects to this. The first is for them to dwell on their sinfulness, their need for a Saviour, and then the finished work of Christ – through songs, prayers of confession and thanks, readings. The second is for them to be reminded that they are part of God’s family with God as their Father – through the notices, pastoral prayer, children’s talk.

Word: The final part of the service which the first two parts will hopefully prepare people for is where we hear read and preached God’s WORD.

2. Typical Order of Service.



3. The Sunday morning service at Banstead Community Church is the main weekly worship gathering of the church where God’s Word is preached.