

Worship (Summary Lectures)

Speaker: Dr. Gary Parrett

Preliminary concerns (lecture 1)

Worship is controversial (“Worship Wars”)

Misconceptions

1. Worship is singing
2. Worship is something we do on occasion

Key biblical terms

1. *shachah, proskuneo* means:

2. *'avad, latreuo* means:

Definition of worship:

Meaning of English “worship”:

Principle #1: Worship always involves both revelation and response (lecture #2)

“Worship is initiated by God, who graciously reveals himself to us, and we respond in faithful ways.”

“Worship is our faithful response to God’s gracious revelation.”

Key Bible texts

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Romans 12:1-2

Isaiah 6:1-8

a.

b.

c.

Why is Isaiah’s response not normative for worshippers (even though it should be)?

Principle #2: Worship is something that we do both individually and in community (lecture 3).

We can also speak of worship both as an habitual part of our lives and as a specific, intentional action.

1. Intentional gathering, and the ongoing life of the worshipping individual

2. Individual and community

Hypocrisy comes from:

Example of prayer as both intentional and habitual

Worship is the 24/7 vocation of every Christian, but we rejoice at the opportunity to intentionally set aside time to worship God.

God values the lifestyle commitment to worship even more than he values intentional worship acts.

Principle #3. Habitual lifestyle worship is more important than our intentional actions of worship in religious settings

Verses

Isaiah 1:10-18

Amos 5:21-24

Micah 6:6-8 (Jesus' teaching on the Greatest Commandment)

True of the church today as well

In a sense, those intentional actions of worship are to be tokens of the deeper reality, the outward tokens of a deeper, inner, spiritual reality.

When is our worship hypocritical?

Principle #4. Individual worship and congregational worship inform and strengthen one another.

Relationship between individual and corporate worship

a. Because we worship God as individuals:

b. Because we have worshipped with the body of Christ:

Emphasis of corporate worship is on:

Principle #5. Worship requires participation; it is not a spectator sport (lecture 4)

“When you come together” (1 Cor 11-14)

“I am going to watch worship; I watched worship very well”

Old Testament examples of participatory worship

Theology of amplification and its effect on the congregation’s participation

1 Cor 14:26

a. Everybody:

b. Done for the sake of:

1 Cor 11:16 — “Amen” (2 Cor 1:20)

Response to the reading of God’s word (Neh 8)

Eph 5:18-21

Principle #6. Worship involves participation of our entire being (lecture 5)

Worship that engages only one part of our being is inadequate

Deut 6:5; Psalm 103:1

1.

2.

3.

4.

Principle #7. The substance of our worship is always more important than the style or form of our worship

Styles of worship vs. the heart of worship

Style or worship is secondary to the substance of worship

Liturgical form of worship

Principle #8. When we worship as a community, we are participating in something larger than ourselves. (lecture 6)

It is not simply about "me and Jesus"

1 Cor 11:17ff. and the unity of the one body of Jesus

"Discern the body"

Balance of "I" and "we" songs as well as "thou" songs

"Catholic" church

Principle #9. We worship as a community, our concerns for individual freedom and self-expression must be balanced with the need to "prefer one another in love" and "consider others more important than yourself." (lecture 7)

Phil 2:3-4

Need to acknowledge the presence and needs of others who are different from us

My own self-expression needs might be best served in my private worship time (1 Cor 14:28)

Church shopping and church hopping

Principle #10. Worship is first and foremost for God and about God; its benefits in forming believers and in reaching unbelievers are secondary.

Balance of worship, nurture, and outreach, but emphasis on worship

Royal "Waste" of Time

What is Paul's understanding of being "seeker sensitive" (1 Cor 14:24-25)

Principle #11. God is both the Subject and the Object of our worship

1. God as the subject of our worship

2. God is the object of worship

Romans 11:36 ("theo-centric")

Key passages (lecture 8)

A. The Ten Commandments (the Decalogue)

B. Leviticus

C. Hebrews 9-10

J.B. Torrance, *Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace*. "Our participation through the Spirit in the Son's communion with the father."

D. John 4:1-26

"worship is spirit and truth"

"I Am Who I Am" and the "God of the Month Club"

E. Psalms

F. Revelation

Implications for Designing Worship Experiences (lecture 9)

1. Worship should include elements of revelation and response.

Revelation

Scripture readings and biblical preaching

Songs of substance

Testimony and other spiritual gifts

Sacraments

Response

Prayer

Responsive readings

Confession of sin

Professions of faith

Testimony

Singing, clapping, shouting (praise and lament)

Presentation of tithes and offerings

Both revelation and response

Faith confession (Apostles' Creed; Nicene Creed)

Choral or solo presentations

Hymns and praise songs

Silence

Tradition hymns and contemporary praise

2. Worship should be Christocentric.

3. Worship should be Trinitarian.

4. Worship should counteract the tendency to focus on self and instead emphasize the community.

5. We must take opportunities to stretch our understanding about what true worship is and involves.

Issues of style and format (lecture 10)

God is more concerned with substance than style.

We should appreciate the strengths of various styles.

Format based on the design of the temple and tabernacle

Format based on Isaiah 6:1-8

Reflection Questions

Preliminary Concerns

1. As an overview, without going into too much detail, what are some of the basic issues as you see it in the worship wars? What has the battle looked like in your experience?
2. Are you old enough, or do you know anyone old enough, to share about the changes that have taken place over the past 50 years? Is there any part of your current worship service that is the result of difficult changes occurring many years ago? The idea of this question is to gain some perspective. I would imagine that some of the aspects of worship that you consider standard today were at an earlier date considered novel and different.
3. How would you answer someone who says that we worship on Sunday morning by singing, and after the worship service comes the sermon?
4. Come up with a preliminary definition of worship. Hopefully you will fine-tune it as you work through these lectures.

Principle #1

5. Gary's definition of worship as "revelation and response" is basic to his entire thesis. What do you think about it?
6. What are some of the ramifications of this definition of worship for you personally? Hopefully you are answering this question before hearing the rest of the lectures.
7. Why don't we all respond the way Isaiah responded to the revelation of God? Gary has a particularly powerful answer to this question; how would you state it?
8. How can we make clarity of revelation a priority so that our response will truly be faithful and appropriate?

Principle #2

9. In review, what is the difference between habitual and intentional acts of worship?
10. Have you ever thought of your life as being a habit of worship? Do you agree? Does your life need to change for this to be true? How so?
11. How would you explain the relationship between intentional acts of worship and your everyday life?
12. Gary uses the example of prayer as being both intentional and habitual. Can you think of any other?
13. We have all been hypocritical, in one way or another, in worship. How is this true in your life? We all have striven, I would hope, in being authentic in worship as well. How is this also true for you?

Principle #3

14. How did you feel when Gary read Isaiah 1:10-18? Did you hear it as something said to people of old, or did you hear Isaiah speaking directly to you? What are some modern parallels of good things that God requires that have become “evil” because of religiosity and inauthentic worship?
15. What are some examples of the reality of worship being replaced by religious rituals?

Principle #4

16. How has corporate worship strengthened and/or refined your private worship? How the reverse also shown itself?

Principle #5

17. What has encouraged you at times to “watch worship”? What has encouraged you to participate in worship?
18. What practical steps can be taken to encourage participation? Gary will give some of his ideas at the end of the lecture series, but come up with some on your own.
19. How does amplification affect you and your church? Think through both positive and negative (if any) examples.
20. What do you think of saying “amen” to the sermon as a means of congregational participation in the sermon?

Principle #6

21. What have been your experiences of church worship that engaged only one part of your being?
22. How often have we heard someone say, “I want to find a church where I fit in”? What are the dangers of this approach?
23. We are challenged to always have engaged minds during worship. How will that work itself out in the different parts of your worship service such as singing and preaching?
24. Does your tradition favor engaging the mind or the emotions in worship? How is this enforced culturally? What can you do to break out of it?
25. Do you worship God with your body, or do you sit in Stoical quietness? How will you respond truthfully and physically to the revelation of God in worship? Do you need to?

Principle #7

26. List examples of style of worship as opposed to the substance of worship.
27. Do you agree that the style of worship is secondary to the substance? Why?
28. How can you differentiate between style and substance? How can you help others see the difference? Why do people hang on so tightly to old styles of worship?

29. Is there a place in your worship for a liturgical worship service?
30. What is the liturgy of your church? This is an especially important question for people attending a "contemporary" church service.

Principle #8

31. How should our worship act out the fact that the church is one body?
32. How are we to examine ourselves in communion, and what is its relationship to worship?
33. Do you agree with Parrett's evaluation of the narcissistic, self-absorbed, self-focused nature of western culture that is part of the church? How does it show itself in your church?
34. How can we become intentional about community in worship, the "we" part of worship?
35. If you are a protestant, have you ever thought about the "catholic" church, the universal church of which you are a part? How can you expand your thinking of the church beyond the local body at which you worship?

Principle #9

36. What are some specific ways in which different groups of people in your church can value other groups. For example, the young and the old; men and women; quiet and outgoing; hymn and chorus, organ and guitar.
37. What would a combined "traditional" and "contemporary" service look like in your church? What good would come out of it? What opposition would you meet? Do you think having two services, contemporary and traditional, is a good thing or a sign of spiritual defeat?
38. What is good and what is bad about shopping for a church?

Principle #10

39. Do you agree with this principle?
40. Should worship be a "Royal 'Waste' of Time"?
41. How can we construct the worship service so that it is primarily about worshipping God and only secondly be about teaching believers and reaching unbelievers?

Principle #11

42. Does it help you to think of God as both the subject and object of worship? Will it have any practical effect on your worship?

Key Passages

43. What do you think of Gary's paralleling New Testament passages with the first four commandments? Did it help you make the Decalogue more applicable?

44. What did you think of Torrance's definition of worship?
45. What does it mean to worship "in spirit and in truth"?
46. What are the implications of God saying "I am who I am" rather than "I am whoever you want me to be"? Gary had a little fun with the "God of the Month Club"!
47. Do you and your church reflect the conviction that God is the real "seeker"? Do you agree with Gary?
48. Psalms contains worship that moves from "deep lament to exuberant praise." Is this a correct statement, and does your church reflect the same variety of worship experiences?

Implications for Designing Worship Experiences

49. What elements of the worship service geared toward revelation struck you as the most significant? Would you add any more? Do you practice public reading of Scripture?
50. How can we encourage one another to sing songs of substance? Where do you find them?
51. How can we keep the sacraments (ordinances) from being meaningless rituals? How can we do them in a way that is instructional?
52. Gary has many other suggestions on how to order a service of worship such that there is appropriate response. Which ones struck you as especially important? How about silence?
53. What do you think about the balance between the deep hymns of the faith and the simplicity of choruses?
54. How do you keep worship Christocentric? What else strives to be the center of our worship?
55. What practical steps can we take to ensure a Trinitarian worship service? What are the advantages of doing so?
56. What in our current worship service tends toward individualism, and what tends toward community. How do we balance these two, or do we?

Format and style of Worship (lecture 10)

57. Do you agree that no one style of worship is necessarily "the" right style?
58. If we are primarily critics then we are not primarily worshipers when we gather together." Do you agree with Gary's statement?
59. What would happen if we designed a worship service around the tabernacle, or around Isaiah 6?

Conclusion

60. Now that you are done with the lectures, how would you define worship? Come up with a short, succinct answer and a longer one (about a paragraph).