

WORSHIP FOUNDATIONS

Session 1

Worship Foundations

A. Definitions of Worship

1. How would you define worship?
 - a. A good place to begin will be with a definition for worship
 - b. There are many definitions for worship:
 - i. Bruce Leafblad, "Worship is a communion with God in which believers, by grace, center their mind's attention and the heart's affection on the Lord, humbly glorifying God in response to His greatness and His Word."
 - ii. Student at Angola (tell about work at Angola), "Worship is adoration given from the created to the Creator."
 - iii. William Temple, "To quicken the conscience by the holiness of God"
"To feed the mind with the truth of God"
"To purge the imagination by the beauty of God"
"To open the heart to the love of God"
"To devote the will to the purpose of God"
2. Defining worship from God's Word
 - a. Hebrew - "Shachah" = bow down or prostrate oneself [Exodus 4:31]
 - b. Greek - "Proskuneo" = kiss the hand towards one or prostrate oneself
 - c. Paul used the word "Leitourgia" = life of worship
 - i. [Romans 12:1] "*I appeal to you to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice*"
3. Describing worship
 - a. Defies definition
 - b. It can only be experienced
 - c. Some experiences are so great / intimate / real they can be difficult to describe

B. Worship Theology - Aspects of Worship

1. Mystery
 - a. Worship both the revelation and mystery of God
 - b. Experience God's presence; stand in awe and wonder
 - i. Mystery = God's Transcendence
 - ii. Revelation = God's Immanence
 - c. Must approach God with awe and wonder - it is a miracle!

2. Celebration
 - a. Celebration of God's mighty acts in history [Psalm 145]
 - b. Celebration of God's mighty acts during the week
3. Life
 - a. Worship is not limited to devotion, rites, or ceremonies
 - b. Worship is life for the Christian
 - c. Worship is practicing the presence of God every moment
 - d. Brother Lawrence, *Practicing the Presence of God*
 - e. Talk about the "measure of our worship as being outside the walls of the church" quote
4. Dialogue
 - a. Worshipers experience God in conscious dialogue [Isaiah 6]
 - b. Revelation and response
 - c. Who begins the dialogue? God - ALWAYS
 - d. God reveals Himself how?
 - i. Word
 - ii. Circumstances
 - iii. Believers
 - iv. Symbols
 - v. Music
 - e. We respond to Him through words, music, acts of celebration, and obedience
 - f. Worship is more than a conversation, it is an encounter
 - g. Can you provide biblical examples of encounters with God?
 - i. Adam & Eve in the Garden
 - ii. Jacob + Wrestling with Angel
 - iii. Moses + Burning bush
 - iv. Wise Men + Vision
 - v. Mary + Angels
 - vi. Angels + Shepherds
 - i. Real encounters with God ALWAYS bring transformation
 - j. Meaningful worship ALWAYS leads to decisive experiences with God
5. Offering
 - a. Primary purpose of worship is not receiving blessings, but giving offerings
 - b. Worship is all about giving
 - i. Quote 96:8
 - ii. Phrase: "I did not get much from that worship" is telling - it was not for you
 - c. Worship is giving ourselves to God - intellect, feelings, attitudes, possessions [Philippians 4:18]
6. Eschatological function
 - a. Continuing decisive working out of salvation in history, which ends in eternal adoration of God
 - b. In worship we anticipate a coming time when we will be gathered around God's throne in heaven
 - c. Our worship is a part of an ongoing stream of praise going on in heaven now [Revelation 5]

7. Reality

- a. General worship insights
 - i. Worship is the most important function of the church, not evangelism or nurturing, these are outpourings of our worship
 - ii. The church cannot be Christian without worship
 - iii. Worship is the most important function of our personal life
 - iv. God is far more interested in our devotion than our Kingdom service

C. Role of Worship Planner / Worship Leader

1. Usher

- a. Huge responsibility
- b. What you do week by week is bigger than simply creating a set list
- c. You, your goals, your values, your objectives, and indeed, your view of God, are shaping an entire congregation's view of God, themselves, and their world

2. The sequence of worship matters

- a. God was transcendent before He was immanent
- b. Remember the cross and the gospel are best understood against the backdrop of God's holiness and sovereignty; both represent profound transcendent attributes of God
- c. With transcendence in full view first, the starting point of the gospel becomes God and God's holiness, rather than man and man's corruption by sin
- d. As worship pastors, we must fight modern cultures propensity to casually bypass the transcendence of God, while running ill-equipped to embrace God's nearness, provision, and works on our behalf -- all of which will be misunderstood without the appropriate transcendent contextualization
- e. To reverse the "rush to immanence" propensity of our times requires effort and intentionality
 - i. We must battle our own acculturated inclinations
 - ii. We must establish the transcendent otherness of God as we call our people to come in fear and trembling before a God who is above, beyond, and other than we are
- f. What comes first in an order of worship interprets and establishes the context for every other element
- g. Worship is affected, empowered, enhanced, or diminished by the manner in which the worshiper perceives God

- h. Our views of God have gradually weakened as the *Age of Immanence* and the *Age of Individualism* have eroded the belief that God is wholly other than His creation
 - i. We should not approach God with a sense of entitlement
 - ii. Worship is not a dialogue between two equals
- 3. Biblical patterns and scriptural contours matter (*works with any style of music or congregation*)
 - a. The rhythm of transcendence before immanence is established in Genesis 1:1
 - b. Opening words in worship establish the One who is summoning Christians to worship
 - c. Meta-narrative of the bible (overarching Canon)
 - i. Creation → Fall → Redemption → Consummation
 - ii. God is above all - He is Creator
 - d. The gospel story = God is holy, man is sinful, Jesus saves, Jesus sends
 - e. Other biblical models include: Isaiah 6:1-8 and Psalm 95
- 4. Self-examination
 - a. Questions to ask about the way we plan worship (*think about previous week's worship order*):
 - i. What story about God am I telling?
 - ii. What picture of God am I forming in the mind and heart of my congregation?
 - iii. What biblical paradigms am I using to shape the services I lead?
 - iv. Are the categories of transcendence and immanence significant players in my mind and heart as I prepare worship?
 - v. Is the foundational picture of God I paint each Sunday grand, glorious, all-mighty, enormous, majestic, holy, eternal, and all-knowing?
 - vi. Has the cultural "rush to immanence" affected the way I plan worship?
 - vii. Do I focus more on what God does than who God is?

Warning: This transcendent / immanent approach to worship planning, while Biblical, is not an approach commonly used in our worship culture, i.e. You may find yourself swimming upstream.