



GATHERED

The Empowered Presence of God's People

TEACHER NOTES & DISCUSSION GUIDE

SESSION NINE: The Worship of the Church

A Study on the Church by



SMYRNAFIRST
BAPTIST CHURCH



Session Nine

The Worship of the Church

Introduction

Nothing is as important as worship. We are all creatures, meaning that we were created and because of this we are by design beholden to a person greater than ourselves. Therefore, worship is something that flows out of all human beings regardless of whether they realize it or not. We worship because we are human.

Of course, if we are not consciously aware of worship, it is probably fixed on something inferior to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We will always be worshippers of something. So even those who profess no faith in God will be worshippers. God cares not only *that* we worship, but he delights in *how* we worship.

Sin is missing the mark. When a sniper seeks to hit a target many hundreds of yards away, he or she must take into account all factors and remember all their training if they hope to hit the mark. When they become neglectful of their training or lazy in the observance of the rules of their skill, they will often miss the target. This is exactly the same for our practice of worship.

I. The Heart of Worship

A. Worship is about the exaltation of God. **Psalm 95** helps us see why and how we should worship.

1. Worship of God is commanded.

a) **Psalm 95:1-2**

- (1) Let us sing, let us make a joyful noise to him, let us come into his presence
- (2) Worship is the recognition of God's greatness and actively drawing near to him.

b) **1 Chronicles 16:29** "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him! Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness"

- (1) Worship is the celebration of God's perfect person; it is the agreement with God about himself.

2. Foundation of his worth

a) **Psalm 95:3-5**

- (1) For the Lord is a great God, a great King
- (2) He is the creator and therefore worthy of his creation's praise.

3. Worship of God requires the prostration of man.

a) **Psalm 95:6**

b) Let us worship and *bow down*; *kneel* before the Lord, our maker.

- (1) This is the physical posture of worship.
- (2) This is the posture indicated by:
 - (a) Abraham in taking Isaac up Mount Moriah to "worship". (**Gen. 22:5**)
 - (b) Solomon consecrates the first temple with noses to ground (**2 Chron. 7:3**)

(c) Ezra reads the torah in rediscovery of God's Word (**Neh. 8:6**)

4. Foundation of our submission

a) **Psalm 95:7a-b**

- (1) He is our God
- (2) We are his people; his sheep; in his pasture.
- (3) We should gladly submit because we were graciously gathered.

5. Worship is an invitation to join God

a) **Psalm 95:7c-11**

- (1) Worship is a response to God's word "Today, if you hear his voice..."

- (2) Worship is an invitation “do not harden your hearts”
 - (a) Harden your hearts is unbelief
 - (b) This is the place (Meribah and Massah) where his people grumbled and doubted his provision after bringing them out of Egypt.
 - (c) “put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.”
- (3) Failure to worship correctly brings judgment.
 - (a) “I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest.”
 - (b) Failure to worship dishonors God and forgets his works. “They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways.”
- B. Worship encompasses the total sphere of life.
 - 1. It is personal - requires individual acts of worship and service.
 - 2. It is familial - requires generational instruction and observance.
 - 3. It is corporate - requires the regular gathering of God’s people.
 - a) This lesson will focus on the corporate nature of worship in the church.

II. The Water and the Table

1. Baptism of Believers

- a) Baptism signifies union with Christ
 - (1) Romans 6: 4-5 “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been **united** with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be **united** with him in a resurrection like his.”
 - (2) Baptism is entrance into the kingdom
 - (a) It is the public profession of faith in Christ that unites to Christ and thus to his people.
 - (b) Therefore it is observed by the congregation as a witness and testimony.
- b) Baptism is the water of cleansing and judgment.
 - (1) The water of cleansing -
 - (a) **1 Peter 3:21** “Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”
 - (b) Not outward cleansing, but inward.
 - (2) The water of judgment -
 - (a) **1 Peter 3:21** “Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you,
 - (b) The ark was brought safely through water.
 - (c) We are likewise brought safely through the water of God’s judgment of sin. The water purifies in that it signifies the death of sin (the old man) and the atonement which makes the righteous (the new man) come out alive on the other side.
 - (3) Baptism is by immersion in water
 - (4) Baptism is for professing believers
 - (5) Baptism is the entrance into the kingdom, but how do we continue.

2. The Lord’s Supper

- a) A covenantal meal
 - (1) Just as the Passover signified the shedding of the lambs blood in the salvation of Israel, the Lord’s Supper signifies the shedding of the lambs blood in the salvation of spiritual Israel.
 - (2) The elements of unleavened bread and wine signify the body and blood of Christ.
 - (a) The body broken, so we break bread.
 - (b) Unleavened because it is free of sin.



- (c) The blood spilled, so we drink of the vine.
- (3) It is a reminder that we were sinners in need of a sacrifice. It calls to remembrance the work of Christ on the cross.
- (4) But it is also something more
- b) A celebration of grace
 - (1) We celebrate the sacrifice made on our behalf.
 - (2) Because of the body and blood, we stand righteous before God.
 - (3) It is the presence of Jesus among us when we take the meal together.
 - (4) The table indicates the welcome invitation of grace from God.
- c) A place of reconciliation
 - (1) We are to be mindful of our lives when taking the supper.
 - (2) Confess sin, reconcile with our brothers and sisters, some even reserve corporate discipline for this time.
 - (3) The supper should be a place of complete freedom to confess sin and rejoice in God's grace.

III. The Elements of Biblical Worship

- A. Churches must ask themselves what is appropriate for corporate worship. There are generally two schools:
 - 1. Regulative worship - Only do in corporate worship that which the Bible explicitly mandates.
 - 2. Normative worship - Do in corporate worship that which the Bible does not explicitly condemn.
- B. For the purpose of this lesson, we will simply look at the expressions of corporate worship that are explicitly given in Scripture.
 - 1. **Centrality of the Word**
 - a) The Bible must be central in our worship. If worship is our response to God's revelation to us, then worship must be bound up in the proclamation of Scripture and instrumental in how we respond.
 - b) **1 Timothy 4:13** "Until I come, devote yourself to the *public reading of Scripture*, to *exhortation*, to *teaching*..."
 - c) **2 Timothy 4:2** "*preach the word*; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."
 - (1) We will always put the Bible in an exalted position in worship, because when the Bible speaks, God speaks.
 - (2) Public reading
 - (3) Preaching (especially expository)
 - (4) Teaching (explaining for the purpose of obedience)
 - 2. **Prayer**
 - a) **Matthew 21:13** "My house shall be called a house of prayer."
 - b) **1 Timothy 2:8** "I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling"
 - (1) We come together to praise, request, confess, & thanks.
 - (2) If God is speaking to us, we cannot help but reply.
 - (3) Prayer is the indication that we stand in need of God's provision and direction. It is an expression of dependence on him.
 - 3. **Singing**
 - a) **Ephesians 5:19-20** "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,"

- b) **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."
 - (1) Songs should aid us in teaching Christian doctrine, memorizing Scripture, articulating praise, giving testimony, and expressing our range of human emotion to the Lord.
 - (2) The text indicates that songs should be expressions of thanksgiving and gratitude as well as teaching.
 - (3) Singing is one way that we continue to "let the word of christ dwell in us richly"
 - (4) Therefore, it should always accord with Scripture and never blur the lines of what Scripture teaches.
 - 4. **Giving**
 - a) **2 Corinthians 9:7** "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."
 - b) God calls every saint to contribute to the needs of others and of the work of the gospel.
 - c) As such, our resources are given regularly in corporate worship.
 - 5. **Orderliness**
 - a) **1 Corinthians 14:40** "But all things should be done decently and in order."
 - b) We should not allow anything in our corporate worship that stirs up confusion or division.
 - 6. **Regularity**
 - a) **Hebrews 10:25** "not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."
 - b) This is why we cannot really worship corporately by remote. The people of God are gathered and are meant to be together. It is a sin to neglect the assembling of the saints.
- C. We cannot deny cultural realities in worship.
 - 1. The Bible does not prescribe everything to be done in Christian worship (so I do not totally follow the Regulative principle).
 - 2. The Bible does not treat worship casually (so I do not totally follow the Normative principle).
 - 3. Christian worship should be the Scriptural exaltation of God and proclamation of Jesus Christ through the Spirit-empowered gathered people of God.

Conclusion

God has given us an entire revelation that instructs us on how to approach him in worship. We cannot miss the mark if we are committed to reading and understanding his Word. So, let us remain vigilant in seeking out how to best honor the Lord in his glory through worship.

Since worship is not about me, I will work to align my delights with what brings God most glory.

Since worship is about reconciliation, I will put off my old self and put on that which accords with godliness.

Since worship is about the kingdom, I will not dilute it with confusion or mixed messages.

Since worship must include certain elements, I will not despise any service that God has asked me to give him.



Session Nine

Discussion Guide

USE AS MUCH OR AS LITTLE OF THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE AS YOU LIKE.

Introduction

Name some elements of worship that you know comes expressly from the Bible. Name some elements of worship that may be more cultural in their origins.

I. The Heart of Worship

How can we be sure that God is the one getting the glory in our corporate worship?

Psalm 95 was used extensively to help us see the centrality of God's glory in worship. Let's read it together and discuss elements of the psalm that we still practice today.

What are the implications of being "prostrate" before the Lord or "bowing" or "kneeling" before him in worship? What does it say about him? About us?

In the lesson, worship is described as something we do in response to God's revelation. How does that happen in corporate worship?

II. The Water and the Table

How does baptism illustrate the flood of Noah? In what ways is it similar?

Do you see yourself as an active participant in every baptism? How should you be engaged personally? Or, what does a baptism in corporate worship require of you in congregation?

Discuss union with Christ as the Bible teaches baptism to be. How are we buried with Christ? How are we raised with Christ? What does this mean?

Search your own heart and answer this: have I been casual with the Lord's Supper? Does it make me think of the seriousness of my sin and of the Lord's grace?

What practical steps can I take to ensure I am giving the proper place to the observance of the Lord's Supper? What outward ways can I demonstrate its importance? What inward ways can I demonstrate its importance?

Have I ever confessed sin or made right a broken relationship during my observance of the Lord's Supper? If not, why not?

III. The Elements of Biblical Worship

The lesson mentioned six elements of biblical worship. Can you recall all six?

The centrality of God's Word is very important corporate worship. Is it possible that all six elements are simply ways to put the Bible on display? How could that be done?

Worship and singing sometimes get confused as one thing. Why does music seem to be such a controversial element in the church? What do you think is the root cause of this if the purpose of music is to unify, teach, and offer thanks?

Let's try to identify these six elements in our most recent worship service.