

Thoughts to Ponder about Worship

*Think through these “sound bites” from four authors.
What insights do you pick up from them that can help your worship service?*

Tim Keller, pastor. Interviewed by Christianity Today.

When you strip away all the externals, what is corporate worship? Worship is treasuring God: I ponder His worth and then do something about it—I give Him what He’s worth. Every brand of worship must have those two elements. Public worship just means you’re doing it in concert with others.

An emotional experience may not be worship. Correct. Feelings—perhaps induced by my surroundings or whatever—are stirred, but there is no impact on my whole life. Our emotions become a legitimate part of worship when, in response to a truth about God, we give something back to God: our money, our sin, our praise. However, if I leave Sunday morning having had no emotional connection whatsoever, I haven’t worshiped. I must allow my heart to be touched.

What role should aesthetics play in worship? Aesthetics, or art, is a movement from the right brain to the left. Clearly, people are brought to faith through great aesthetics. The power of art draws people to behold it. After a while they begin to wonder if the ideas that inspired it are true. That’s one reason why large churches that focus on excellence in worship attract more non-Christians. A non-Christian is attracted to the art of a tight-sounding worship band or string quartet.

Is the reason for good art in worship because God deserves our best? That’s one reason. But, frankly, I doubt that to God there’s much difference between the classically trained soloist or Brother Joe’s nephew. Even our most highly trained musicians are probably not going to impress Almighty God. God is the one we want to please, and I doubt He judges on the basis of aesthetics. Aesthetics are important as an effective means for people to grasp the truth about God so they can give Him what He’s worth—to worship. Good aesthetics remove the obstacle of distraction that bad art places in the path of the would-be worshiper.

Isn’t focusing on aesthetics, though, merely catering to our culture’s consumer mindset? Effective evangelism has usually combined excellent aesthetics with communication. The object is to communicate a message that penetrates the head, the heart, and the will.

Robert Logan. Coachnet Document.

- The essence of worship is acknowledging the Lordship of Christ in our lives.
- Worship is first and foremost a heart condition. If this is true, the biggest deterrent to worship is personal kingdoms we refuse to give over to Christ.
- True worship is a dynamic process of celebration and reflection which adores the Creator and ministers to the everyday needs of those who participate.

Rick Warren. *The Purpose Driven Church.*

1. We do not have to make the Bible relevant—it already is! But we do have to *show* its relevance.
2. People need fewer “ought-to” sermons and more “how-to” sermons.
3. The deepest kind of teaching is that which makes a difference in people’s day-to-day-lives.
4. When God’s Word is taught in an uninteresting way, people don’t just think the pastor is boring, they think *God* is boring!
5. Your preferred style of worship says more about your cultural background than your theology.
6. In genuine worship God’s presence is felt, God’s pardon is offered, God’s purposes are revealed, and God’s power is displayed.
7. Making a church “comfortable” for the unchurched doesn’t mean changing your theology. It means changing the environment.
8. Being seeker sensitive doesn’t limit what you say, but it does affect *how you say* it.
9. The difference between an average service and an outstanding service is flow.
10. Match your music to the kind of people God wants your church to reach.
11. There is no such thing as “Christian music.” There are only Christian lyrics.
12. Music sets the mood of your service.

The Missing Jewel--Paul Mizzi

I consent with A.W.Tozer's statement that worship is "the missing jewel of the evangelical churches." Such an evaluation concerning worship is not simply negative; it seeks repentance and reformation in the ways where we have gone astray.

On the whole, and judging from my reading and my experience both abroad but especially locally, Christians are not even aware that the Father is seeking such who worship him in Spirit and truth. They are not taught that worship is the "ultimate priority," as pastor J.MacArthur, Jr. called it. And it certainly is.

Worship is expressed by such terms as *latrueô* and *proskuneô*. The former signifies to serve, to render religious service or homage. The latter means to make obeisance, do reverence, (*pros*, towards, *kuneô*, to kiss). In worshipping man takes his proper place, with his face to the ground and God is acknowledged for who he is: the Creator, Preserver and Sovereign Redeemer of his elect. When God is confessed in this way, our whole life, attitude, world-view, and perspective on all things will be radically affected.

Perhaps the Lord has hid his face from us and has caused us to stumble; we are groping in darkness, multiplying activities and running here and there, assuming we are serving God. But God wants the sacrifice of ourselves before he wants what we have. The All-sufficient One does not need us: "If I were hungry I would not tell you" (Ps.) Perhaps we think we're doing God a favor in attending worship services; and we do not realize that in worshipping God we come to know both him and ourselves better.

The evangelical church today suffers in this way, I think, because it is much engulfed in the spirit of the age. Being men of little faith, we do not "see" the invisible God. Thus it is only "sometimes" that God surprises us with his presence, as Cowper expressed it in verse.

Spiritual worshippers, those kind of people which God seeks for himself, can be today denominated as Christians. Non-Christians in no way can or are even willing to worship God according to his requirements. Philippians 3 says "we are the true worshippers, who worship God in Spirit and put no confidence in the flesh." "We are the true circumcision."

True worship begins in knowing and acknowledging God as the only true God, and our God and Father. Pharaoh found no reason to obey or worship, "I do not know him," he retorted haughtily.

Our worship should be in accordance to God's being and revelation of himself. Will-worship is condemned and unacceptable. It is called "strange fire." Many people may sound sincere and zealous but they are inventing ways of worshipping instead of submitting to God's directives. Christians worship best by thinking of God, meditating upon him, remembering and highly esteeming him. We are called to adore, choose, love, desire and fear him.

The three cardinal virtues of faith, hope and love are to be directed towards him. Thus we are to give all praise and thanks and yield all obedience and submission to him with all our being. In worshipping Him God is pleased for this is his due and we are to be sorrowful and displeased when we fail in this fundamental matter.

Humility and a spiritual frame of mind makes our worship possible. The mind set on the spirit is life and peace (Romans 8). Thus man find true fulfillment is being lost in wonder, love and praise of his Creator and Redeemer.