

# Sound Living

## The Christian's Worship

Jerry Nelson

Worship. The very word stirs up myriad images and concepts. Our confusion, and at times discontent, can put a negative spin on corporate worship. God wants us to worship Him well, but how do we accomplish that? This study, filled with biblical examples, principles for worship, and practical applications reminds us that worship is all about our great God.

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## Chapter One

### Keeping the Sabbath Holy Exodus 20:8-11

Even within the past 50 years, in many Christian churches and homes, there were certain things you couldn't do because it was Sunday. Sunday was a day to stop work and give the day to worship, to fellowship, or to helping the sick and poor. It was not a day for fixing things around the house or even for recreation. I have told you before the story of my father deciding to not harvest hay on a Sunday even though it meant a financial loss. I remember discussions of whether playing ball on Sunday was okay or not – incidentally my parents decided it was fine.

Most of you know that even today in Denver, car-dealerships are closed on Sundays. Not that long ago most stores were closed on Sunday. Even today in 2005, Bergen County, New Jersey, hosting one of the largest shopping areas near to New York City, is completely closed on Sundays. The first law prohibiting work and commerce on Sunday was issued by The Christian Emperor Constantine in A.D. 321 "Let all judges and all city people and all tradesmen rest upon the venerable day of the sun..."<sup>1</sup>

Today, in huge contrast, with some seemingly quaint exceptions, hardly anyone suggests that Sunday be treated as different than any other day of the week. Oh Christians may like a day off, but Sunday is not observed primarily because it is the Sabbath but because it allows freedom to do as we choose.

God says in Exodus 20:8-11 *"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your*

*son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”*

***By the time Jesus was here on earth, the Jews had made Sabbath a burden to the people rather than liberating as God intended.***

Why do you think God commanded His people to observe one day in seven as a day of rest from work?

- Was it because God needed the attention that they would give Him on that day?
- Was it because God wanted to make life hard for people by restricting the time they could work to make a living?
- Was it because God wanted to make one day in seven miserable for active boys? Of course not

At creation itself, God established a rhythm that He knew human beings needed. It was for the welfare of people that God created the Sabbath. Sabbath keeping was not punitive but liberating. We'll come back to that later.

So what about the Sabbath? Many Christians consider the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment about remembering the Sabbath to be irrelevant. Some will point out that the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is not specifically reiterated in the New Testament even though the other nine are. Honoring parents is reiterated in the New Testament. Stealing, murder, adultery, covetousness, and the rest of commandments are spoken about in the New Testament—all except Sabbath-keeping.

Others will say that Jesus fulfilled the law so that Sabbath keeping is done. Still others will note that Jesus and Paul repeatedly criticized the legalism that had attached itself to Sabbath keeping.<sup>2</sup> And New Testament writers certainly emphasize that in Christ we live under grace. And some people couple those ideas and conclude that the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is a non-issue. Is that right? Is Sabbath keeping irrelevant to us as believers?

By the time Jesus was here on earth, the Jews had made Sabbath a *burden* to the people rather than *liberating* as God intended. They had determined 39 categories of activities that they said were prohibited by the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment. Those prohibited activities included: Plowing, grinding, baking, weaving, sewing stitches, writing more than one letter, kindling a fire, or carrying anything for a distance of more than a certain number of feet.<sup>3</sup> The legalists of Jesus day were upset that His disciples *picked* some heads of grain to eat on Sabbath. (See Mark 2) They were angry with Jesus because on the Sabbath He *healed* a man with a shriveled hand. (See Mark 3) The Jews had turned the law of Sabbath into **legalism**. They took the commands of God, given for the welfare of His people, and turned them into a way to earn God's favor or incur His wrath. Instead of living by grace through faith in God they turned Sabbath into a merit system. It is no wonder that the average Jew vacillated between legalism and libertarianism—between precision in attempting to keep every law perfectly or giving up and doing whatever they wanted to do. Jesus repeatedly challenged that legalism but never by breaking His own commandments—the commandments of God. He challenged the misuse of the law, not the law.

Through the centuries since Jesus' resurrection, people have struggled with how the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment applies to

Christians. As I said earlier, some simply dismissed the commandment. But others, seeing the validity of God's gracious laws for the good of His people, attempted to apply Sabbath to Christians. By the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, some, in spite of their good motivations and contrary intentions, had turned Sabbath keeping once again into legalism. In 1668, as one example, John Wells, a devout Christ-follower and church-leader wrote an 800-page book on what to do and not do on the Sabbath. One chapter is titled, "A plea with Christians to outvie the Jews in Sabbath-holiness and observations."<sup>4</sup> That kind of thinking prevailed in a large segment of the Christian church especially in England and America.

As much as I love the Westminster Catechism I take exception to its near-legalism when it says in answer to questions 60: "The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except for works of necessity and mercy." Not bad ideas to be sure, but so specific as to create an air of legalism. It is no wonder that the average Christian vacillated between legalism and libertarianism—between attempting to keep the law perfectly or giving up and throwing it all over. And overwhelmingly in our Christian culture, libertarianism has prevailed.

Today Sabbath keeping is largely a non-issue.

- Does anyone still ask what is permissible in observing the Sabbath?
- Does anyone still ask what might be dishonoring to God on the Sabbath?

I think not.

- No one any longer asks if working is okay on Sunday.



- No one asks if buying or selling is okay on Sunday
- No one asks if sports are okay for Sunday.
- Few ask if meeting with God’s people for worship is more important than other activities.

Vacations, spectator sports, youth sports leagues, hunting, fishing, fund-raising events, community events or you-name-it, are perceived as equally legitimate uses of Sunday—equal to worship. What happened? Does it honor God and is it faithful to His Word for us to throw the baby of Sabbath out with the bathwater of legalism?

***It is no wonder that the average Christian vacillated between legalism and libertarianism***

Some think that Sabbath is a uniquely Jewish concept that was abrogated when Jesus came. It is true that the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment of Sabbath keeping is not specifically restated in the New Testament. But what is often overlooked is that Jesus observed the Sabbath, His disciples observed the Sabbath, and, until they were kicked out of the synagogues years later, all subsequent Jewish-Christians observed the Sabbath. And just as importantly, nowhere does the New Testament even suggest that Sabbath keeping is no longer important. It seems that the burden of proof would be on those who suggest that *one* of the Ten Commandments of God is no longer as important. James Dennison wrote, “A moral law once delivered is perpetually obligatory until expressly repealed. The silence of the New Testament is a *confirmation* of the Sabbath, not an abrogation thereof.”<sup>5</sup>

One of the confusing issues for Christians who still think of Sunday as special is that for nearly 2000 years Christians have observed Sunday as the day of worship rather than

Saturday as the Jews did and still do. What is confusing about this is that we have tied the Sabbath concept inextricably to Saturday—we have equated Sabbath with Saturday. We commonly say that the Jews observe Sabbath and we observe Sunday. But Sabbath does not mean Saturday it means, “rest” or “ceasing.” God established the 7<sup>th</sup> day as the day of Sabbath (“ceasing”) but He did not say that day had to be Saturday. The Bible does not say that the 7<sup>th</sup> day was Saturday. Just because somewhere in history-past the Jews chose to call Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> day and then observe Sabbath on it, we easily think of Saturday and Sabbath as the same but they are not. God’s command was not about Saturday Sabbath but about making one-day-in-seven, special to Him.

***It was called the "Lord's Day" because it was the day of the week on which Jesus was powerfully shown to be the sovereign Lord by His resurrection.***

There was nothing wrong with the Jews making that one-day-in-seven, Saturday, but the Bible does not say it *had to be* what we call Saturday. But whichever day it is, Sabbath as a one-day-in-seven, holy to the Lord, is a practice instituted by God and it has as much bearing on God’s people today as on God’s people in Moses’ day. Jonathan Edwards considered the one-day-in-seven as morally binding because it was set at creation and ratified in the Ten Commandments.<sup>6</sup>

Though ever so briefly and incompletely, I have attempted to establish that the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment is about one-day-in-seven being especially set apart to the Lord but that day is not necessarily Saturday. I have attempted to show that

such a one-day-in-seven Sabbath is as important for Christians today as for Jews in Moses' day. I attempted to show this is true by noting, among other evidences, that the command, honored by Jesus himself, has never been rescinded. Sabbath is still to be understood and taken seriously by God's people.

I wish to take a minute to show that Sunday became that special one-day-in-seven for Christians. As early as immediately after the Resurrection, the disciples were meeting on, what was commonly called, the first day of the week (Sunday).

- John 20:19 – *"On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them."*
- John 20:26 – They met again on Sunday.
- Acts 20:7 – *"On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people."*
- 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 – *"Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money..."*

This is not to suggest that God *commands* worship on *Sunday* but only to show that very early in church history Sunday worship became the practice. In fact it was so much the practice that by the time John wrote the book of Revelation, within 50 years of the Resurrection, he refers to that weekly day of worship as "The Lord's Day." (Revelation 1:10) It was called the "Lord's Day" because it was the day of the week on which Jesus was powerfully shown to be the sovereign Lord by His resurrection. J. Bauckham writes, "(Sunday) was simply, by the normative custom of the apostolic church, the day on which Christians met to worship, and, for us, the use of its title, "The Lord's Day", in Revelation 1:10 gives that custom the stamp of (biblical)

authority.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, the *author* of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit Himself gives Sunday the title of “The Lord’s Day”—a day belonging to the Lord in ways that other days don’t. And as soon as it was legally possible, under the Christian Emperor Constantine, in A.D. 321, Sunday was given special status by the government and people were allowed to cease working on that day.

It is no wonder then that eventually Sunday became known as the Christian’s Sabbath. It is true that Sunday is never commanded as the Sabbath day for Christians but precedence alone is as instructive for us as the centuries of Saturday Sabbath was for Jews. But more importantly, the Sunday Resurrection of Jesus and the Bible’s reference to Sunday as “The Lord’s Day” make a strong case for observing Sunday as the Christian Sabbath. One-day-in-

***So how do we remember it? We remember by setting it apart as different and differently used than other days.***

seven is God’s gracious instruction and Sunday is both the meaningful and practical application of that instruction. It is meaningful because it is Resurrection day. It is practical because, as much as possible, we need to select *one* day for God’s people to gather rather than everyone selecting his or her own day.

So what does all this mean for us? It means that we must not run to the extremes of either legalism or libertarianism. As to legalism, to say that we must set aside one-day-in-seven as holy to the Lord does not mean that by doing so we earn God’s grace.

- You will never be more loved by God because you keep the commands of God.
- You will never be more condemned by God because

you fail to keep the commands of God.

- You are loved by grace, not by your precise observance of certain commands.
- God accepts you because Christ fulfilled the perfect law of God, not because you keep the law.

But knowing that does not mean that we run to libertarianism; that we ignore God's gracious instruction in the commandments. Or as Paul asked it in Romans 6:15 *"Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!"*

So how do we respond to God's command of a one-day-in-seven Sabbath? What did God say? Exodus 20:8 says, *"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."*

- "Remember" means "observe without lapse; hold as a present and continuing priority."<sup>8</sup>
- "Remember" not as in merely mentally recalling but doing something about it.

Foolish is the man who says he remembers this is his wedding anniversary but does nothing more.

So how do we remember it? We remember by "keeping it holy." "Keeping it holy" means to set it apart as different and differently used than other days. The very word "Sabbath" gives us understanding. As I said earlier, the word means "cease," "rest," or stop. Exodus 20:9-10a says, *"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God."* The 7<sup>th</sup> day is a "ceasing" a "resting."

What are we to cease? We are to cease laboring/working. But what constitutes work or labor is not specified here. Oh, there were a couple of times in Israel's subsequent history that they had apparently so egregiously violated the spirit of God's law that specific illustrations of what they

were not to do were given. (See Jeremiah 17:22,24) But by and large they and we are not told specifically what we are not to do. I think that is very intentional. God wants us to enter into His commands with a attitude of love for Him not legalist fear of Him. If we desire to please Him we will seek to act in ways that we think will please Him. And because we know He loves us, we can be assured that if we are seeking to please Him, even our poor attempts will be met with approval and encouragement. We aren't looking for what we can get away with; we are looking for how we can personally make this day holy to the Lord.

We ask what we can do to make it special. To make it special we look at what God says about the Sabbath. In Exodus 20:11it says, *"For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy"*.

So first of all, Sabbath was a celebration of creation. God made order out of chaos at creation and he continues to do that in our lives at all times. The week of six days of work with one additional day of ceasing work is the creation pattern. Not only were *six* days needed but *all seven* were needed and specifically the 7<sup>th</sup> day brought something to creation that the first six did not. Sabbath keeping is part of creating order out of chaos. To work all of the time is to return to chaos—witness the rat race of so many. One author noted, "Sabbath keeping puts all human striving aside, recognizes the decisive role of God in creation, and provides for a weekly oasis to rest back in the arms of this reality."<sup>9</sup>

- In Sabbath keeping, in "ceasing," I take time to reflect on God, *the* Creator and my Creator.
- In "stopping," I stop long enough to take stock of my life as lived in His care.

- I revel in His benevolent sovereignty.
- I enjoy what He created.
- I stop to enjoy the day, to enjoy His people, to rest in His love.

But there is more. In Deuteronomy 5:15, after repeating the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment, Moses adds, *"Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day."* So Sabbath is also a commemoration of deliverance—of being set free. In Egypt,

***Sabbath keeping puts all human striving aside, recognizes the decisive role of God in creation, and provides for a weekly oasis to rest .***

Israel was condemned to 24-7 forced labor. Moses requested time for worship but Pharaoh rejected the idea. But God, on behalf of His people, would not be denied. He delivered His people and set them free to work and cease working, to labor and to worship.

Sabbath keeping is a testimony to God's deliverance of Israel and us. God will take care of us. We don't need to work seven days a week to make ends meet. We can trust Him. And when God says no one, not even servants or your animals are to work, it is to show the same humanitarian concern for those around us that God has shown to us; allow them the same ceasing to celebrate creation and deliverance that we enjoy. Sabbath rest is not a burden but a gift to the world. Listen to Isaiah's reflection on Sabbath keeping:

*"If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath*

*and from doing as you please on my holy day,  
if you call the Sabbath a delight  
and the LORD's holy day honorable,  
and if you honor it by not going your own way  
and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,  
then you will find your joy in the LORD,  
and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land  
and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob."*

*The mouth of the LORD has spoken."* (Isaiah 58:13-14)

The Sabbath was a delight.

Some say Sabbath keeping is boring. I love James Dennison's response: "What is boring about setting aside one whole day to delight in the Lord Jesus Christ; what is boring about sequestering one day to enjoy the sweet presence of Christ in public, family and private worship; what is boring about sanctifying one day in teaching one's children the way of salvation, in opening the Scriptures to them at home, in dealing tenderly, lovingly, personally with their souls; what is boring about setting aside one day to visit and pray over the sick, to comfort and relieve the poor, to sit beside the lonely, to minister consolation to the bereaved, to join in warm fellowship with other Christians?"<sup>10</sup>

***Too many of us think of Sunday as a day off but we don't couple that with our need for intimacy with God and God's desire to meet with us to spend time with us.***

But Sabbath keeping was not only for ceasing but also for acting. God ceased working on the 7<sup>th</sup> day but He didn't stop acting. In Leviticus 23:3 we read, "*There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work;*



*wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the LORD.*" This day is to be consecrated to the Lord. In the Bible, Sabbath is filled with praising the Lord (Psalm 92), with special sacrifices (Numbers 28:9-10), with gathering for religious purposes (Leviticus 23:7-8), and for reading and studying God's word (Luke 4:16-21; Mark 6:2 etc). In the New Testament, as God's people gathered together, they prayed, worshipped, gave to meet the needs of others, gave to carry on missionary activity in other places, and they fellowshiped and encouraged each other in their faith. The joy of the Sabbath was not just in *not* working but also in rejoicing in the Lord—hence fellowship and worship naturally followed in the day of rest. That's why the letter to the Hebrews (10:25) urges us: *"Do not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another..."*

All of that said, I know that some of you are waiting for me to spell out what is and what is not acceptable on the Christian Sabbath. You will wait a long time. God didn't do it and I won't. Yes, God says "cease" labor and work, but God gives us reason more than specifics because He wants our hearts not just our compliance. Too many of us think of Sunday as a day off but we don't couple that with our need for intimacy with God and God's desire to meet with us to spend time with us. Simply changing the activity from required employment to selfish enjoyment doesn't meet the intent of Sabbath rest. Many of us take time off of work but we don't complete the creation cycle with a Sabbath—we don't find rest for the soul.

Intimacy with God like intimacy with another person requires time. St. Augustine wrote, in that well-known statement, "You have made us for yourself (God), and our hearts are restless until they find rest in You." This speaks to the need for a person to have something more than just

cessation from employment—but true rest for the soul. Many take time off of work only to fill that time fuller with other activities that only further bleed the soul. In this regard, Abraham Heschel wrote, “He who wants to enter the holiness of the day must first lay down the profanity of clattering commerce, of being yoked to toil. He must go away from the screech of dissonant days, from the nervousness and fury of acquisition and the betrayal of embezzling his own life. He must say farewell to manual work and learn to understand that the world has already been created and will survive without the help of man. Six days a week we wrestle with the world, wringing profit from the earth; on the Sabbath we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul. The world has our hands, but our souls belong to Someone Else.”<sup>11</sup>

The Sabbath—God commanded it because He loves us. Will we respond? Read again Exodus 20:8-11: *“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”*

I close with this from a most helpful book entitled *Keeping Sabbath Wholly*, by Marva Dawn. Sabbath is for:

- The busy people who need to work from a cohesive, unfragmented self;
- For social activists, who need a cycle of worship and action;
- For those who chase after fulfillment and need to understand their deepest yearnings and to hear the

silence;

- For those who have lost their ability to play because of the materialism and technologization of our society – who need beauty and gaiety and delight;
- For those who have lost passion and need to get in touch with feelings; those who are alone and need emotional nourishment;
- For those who cannot find their life's priorities and need a new perspective;
- Sabbath is for those who think the future is dictated by the present, who need hope and visions of the future to change the present order;
- It is for those who are disgusted with dry, empty, formalistic worship and want to love and adore God;
- And Sabbath is for those who want to be God's instruments, enabled and empowered by the Spirit to be world changers."<sup>12</sup>

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy"

End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia.org

<sup>2</sup> Romans 14:5-8, Galatians 4:10, Colossians 2:16-17

<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia.org

<sup>4</sup> R.J. Bauckham in D.A. Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, p. 327

<sup>5</sup> James Dennison in R.C. Sproul, *Soli Deo Gloria*, p. 152

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Edwards, Works, IV, p. 620ff

<sup>7</sup> Carson, Ibid, p. 240

<sup>8</sup> John I. Durham, *Exodus*, p. 289

<sup>9</sup> Terrance Fretheim, *Exodus*, p. 230

<sup>10</sup> Dennison in Sproul, Ibid, p. 152

<sup>11</sup> Abraham Heschel, "A Palace in Time" in *The Ten Commandments*, William Brown (Editor), p 214

<sup>12</sup> Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, Dedication page



## Chapter Two

### The Object of Worship

Over the past few years there has been a great deal of ink used in describing and decrying the war over worship that has been raging in evangelical churches across America. It would probably be excessive to call it a “war” except that the subject of worship has in fact caused some ecclesiastical casualties along the way. When relationships sour and some even break over the subject of worship—something is very wrong. To use the language of the book of Hebrews when people of any age (younger or older) “forsake assembling together” to worship because of worship, they have missed the point.

Have you ever left a worship service thinking or even saying: “I didn’t get a thing out of that.” “The music was terrible, I didn’t know the songs, it just didn’t do a thing for me”? You are not alone, apparently many people have had those thoughts.

I wish to sharpen the focus on the subject of worship. My hope is that by seeing what worship is *and isn’t*, we may gain a new appreciation for what is supposed to be happening on Sunday morning and enter into that experience in ways that bring unity rather than division.

Let me begin by asking you a rhetorical question. What is the primary purpose for gathering a large group of us in one room on Sunday morning? I wish to give you five options. The following options are not necessarily mutually exclusive but only one is the primary purpose for worship?

1. To teach the Word? People need to know the Bible. Music, prayers and other activities ought to prepare us to hear the Word.
2. Conversion of the lost? With so many people needing to know Jesus, our music, testimonies, etc need to make them thirsty to know the Lord.
3. Encouragement of God's people? A lot of weary people need a spiritual lift on Sunday to help them make it through another week.
4. Celebration of the Christian life? Like the 4<sup>th</sup> of July for an American ("The Star Spangled Banner"), so Sunday for the believer is a day to celebrate being a Christian ("I'm So Glad I'm Part of the Family of God").
5. Gather with other Christians to express our love and allegiance to God?

Of the above, only one is actually our primary purpose. The other four may be ways we accomplish the primary purpose or they may be by-products of the primary purpose—but only one is actually our primary purpose. Which is it? To answer that, think with me about worship.

***Worship is the believer's response of all he (the believer) is—in mind, emotions, will and body—to all that God is and says and does.***

What is worship? Psalm 96:9 says, "*Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.*" What does the psalmist mean? Most of you know that our English word "worship" simply means "worth-ship." We worship what is worthy. The Lord is worthy. One Hebrew word translated "worship" is the word "to bow down, to do homage." One Greek word translated "worship" is a word that means "to kiss toward" -

“to show reverence.” Another Greek word means “to serve.” Notice the words convey something about our hearts and our conduct—it is about both, attitude and action. Let me give you a simple definition of worship: “Worship is our response to God for who he is and what he has done.”<sup>1</sup> Slightly expanding the same definition we have this: “Worship is the believer’s response of all he (the believer) is—in mind, emotions, will and body—to all that God is and says and does.”<sup>2</sup> That definition is fairly straightforward but to help us put worship most sharply in focus I want you to look at it more closely with me. And I want you to think about worship in five ways:

## **Worship is about God; it is not about us.**

It is not something done to us or for us. Instead, worship is something we, you and I, do. Worship has an object and it is not us. Mark Horst wrote, “As soon as we come to worship looking for and expecting an experience, we have violated the most basic principle of (worship). We easily become religious aesthetes capable of judging the entertainment value of a church service while remaining unaware of the reality it can open us to. Unfortunately for us, when our worship becomes self-conscious rather than God-conscious, it points not to God’s reality but (only to) our own.”<sup>3</sup>

One of my friends recently said, “There are few places where our self-indulgence is more obviously seen than in our attitudes and words about public worship.” We want what we want when we want it in worship because the focus of our worship has become us rather than God. We think of worship mostly or solely in terms of how it impacts *us* rather than how it impacts God. And we are the losers when we do that. When we seek an experience we may get it but it will be empty and fleeting. Don Carson wrote, “If

you seek peace you will not find it; if you seek Christ, you will find peace. If you seek joy, you will not find it; if you seek Christ you will find joy. If you seek the experience of worship you will not find it; if you seek to worship the living God, you will experience Him.”<sup>4</sup> If we think of ourselves as the necessary beneficiaries of worship we won’t truly worship. If we think of God as the beneficiary of worship, we will also benefit. One of the major reasons people fight over worship today is that they have the wrong person (themselves) in view. Worship is not about us it is about

***True worship is about God not us.***

God.

I want to help people come into the presence of God and allow them time to interact with Him. I want people to consciously, intentionally think about God and engage Him in singing, prayer, listening to His word, vicariously interacting with Him through the testimonies of others, etc. I don’t want to help organize services where the main staple seems to be the routine of a set liturgy, a rather thoughtless ritual where people seem to “do the religiously comfortable” thing week after week without personally engaging God. Neither do I want people to *observe* a worship service as they do a concert—reflecting not on God but on how the “service” makes them feel. Too many times I have heard people, following a concert by some well-known “Christian” artist, express what a great experience it was but when I listened to what made it “great” I didn’t hear anything about God. God wasn’t worshiped, the experience was. Music, especially, has the power to evoke emotions but too often those emotions are not directed toward God but toward ourselves—the music made us feel something such as happy, glad, sad, triumphant, guilty, etc. I too often feel that people judge a worship service as



“good” or not, based on how the service made them feel. We get worship all wrong when *we* become the object rather than God. A man named Christiansen wrote this little piece that says it all too well:

“To be spectators,  
that’s what we like,  
isn’t it?  
No involvement,  
no participation,  
not too close,  
just sit back and watch.  
Be a critic.  
If it isn’t professional enough,  
or isn’t popular,  
it’s the performers!  
I won’t come back.  
I want my money’s worth –  
at church.”<sup>5</sup>

But true worship is about God not us.

## **Worship is a relationship and lifestyle before it is a Sunday activity.**

When the devil asked Jesus to worship him by saying that he would give Jesus the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would bow down and worship him, what did the devil mean? Was this an invitation to change styles of music from pipe organ to guitar? No, it was a question of allegiance—whom will you serve. That’s where worship begins. When God calls us to worship him, He is not calling us *just* to say certain words, in certain ways, in a certain place. It is not worship *just* because Christian words are used on Sunday morning in a church building. One of Jesus harshest criticisms of the Pharisees, the most outwardly

religious people of his day, was this: *"These people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me."*(Matthew 15:8)

Worship is a way of life begun in repentance and faith in Christ—conversion—and lived out in obedience to Him. Any words of worship spoken outside of that context are hollow and even blasphemous. **To expect non-Christians to worship is fruitless. To expect Christians who are living in self-centeredness to worship is also fruitless.** Those who aren't Christians and those who are self-centered will always approach a public church service with the same mind-set with which they approach a concert or a movie—they will judge its value based on how they, the listeners, feel or think. But true worship requires a heart that has been changed by God and a heart that is hungry for God. Worship, including Sunday corporate worship, flows out of the life that is lived Monday through Saturday. Albert Day wrote, *Worship*, "is not merely a flash of God-ward desire, but the passionate fervor of a whole self that pants to know God and his will above all other knowing. It is not a hurried visit to the window of a religious drive-in restaurant for a moral sandwich or a cup of spiritual stimulants, but an unhurried communion with God, who is never in a hurry. It is not merely the expression of a transient mood of dependence or loneliness, but the consistent cry of one who seeks to perceive and express the ultimate beauty. It is the antithesis of dillydally devotions, drowsy murmurs from a pillow where sleep lies in wait, the lazy lispings of familiar phrases that should shake one to the core of one's being. It is the find-or-die outreach of the soul to God."<sup>6</sup>

Worship on Sunday won't happen unless there is first of all a relationship of worship—a life of loyalty to Christ—during the week. Paul Faulkner wrote, "Trying to worship publicly

if you are not a private worshiper is sort of like the dry heavens—trying to bring something up you don't have in you."<sup>7</sup> Worship is a relationship and a lifestyle before it is a Sunday response.

## **Worship has both content and emotion.**

It is from both the head and the heart. It is both informed and it is expressed. Worship is not only correct thoughts about God but also correct thoughts expressed to God. Some of the heat generated in the worship wars is over the issues of substance versus style. Some will argue that the old hymns are stuffy and lifeless. Others will argue that the new songs are trite and shallow. Some want content while others want energy. Almost every Psalm in the Old Testament combines passion *with* content. The Psalmist uses emotive words of excitement or reverence to express

***Worship, including Sunday corporate  
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Monday through Saturday.***

specific things about the Lord. He wrote, "*My heart yearns for you* (emotion) *because you are shelter and you are strength* (content)." Knowledge without emotion is sterile. And emotion without knowledge is equally sterile. "A young man falls in love with a young woman. He begins to whistle a tune as he walks down the sidewalk. Then he sings. He believes that he has never seen a day more beautiful than today the sky, the trees the people. Now he is skipping, almost dancing down the sidewalk. 'Young man, do you know what you are doing?' someone asks. 'What good will all this singing, dancing and joy do you?' What a silly, impertinent question to ask of someone who is in love. Of course he doesn't know what he is doing, and that's just the fun of it... If it is only thought it isn't good worship... Worship is a way of being in love, of glorifying and enjoying

the One of whom we can say, 'We love, because he first loved us'.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand imagine the young man saying to his girlfriend, "I love you, I love you, I love you." And then she asks him what it is he loves about her. He responds, "I don't know, I just love you!" She would have every right to say, "Go away—that is nonsense." Some people fear emotionalism, others fear deadness. Bishop Moule of England was supposed to have said he finds it easier to tone down a fanatic than to resurrect a corpse. Do you know why we sing so much in church? Because music expresses a range of emotions better than almost any other activity. Or as William Willimon said it, "Prose is usually too confining for the joyful business" of worship.<sup>9</sup>

We are able to take our thoughts (content) and express them to God from our hearts (emotion). Expressed emotions of wild enthusiasm are every bit as valid as emotions of quiet adoration. And conversely, expressed emotions of speechless quiet awe are every bit as valid as dancing before the Lord. Worship has content *and* emotion. To further sharpen the focus on worship I want you to think of worship in still another way.

### **Public worship is personal but it is not private.**

Some people want to be left alone in worship as if corporate worship is little more than several hundred people in the same room at the same time, each doing his or her own thing with God. Too many think of public worship as simply many people, in the same place, engaged in *private* worship.

The Denver Post carried an article telling that the Denver Archdiocese is debating whether to continue the practice of asking parishioners to hold hands during the recitation of the Lord's Prayer (as they call it, the "our Father"). Michelle White of Lakewood commented that she dreads holding hands. Her comment was, "My religion is very private."<sup>10</sup> Many people think and speak of their religion as a private matter. It is personal to be sure but not private. We are important to each other in worship. We each bring our personal thoughts and emotions into worship but it is the merging of those thoughts and emotions into our expressions of worship that enrich the worship of our God.

***We are able to take our thoughts (content)  
and express them to God from  
our hearts (emotion).  
Worship has content and emotion.***

Many years ago our family had a marvelously fun time together visiting the streets and sites of Rome. We wandered through the Coliseum. We happened onto an outdoor concert at the Campadoglio in the evening and a carnival in the plaza outside the Parthenon. Seeing all of that alone would have minimized it greatly. But wandering through the streets constantly asking, "Do you see that?" "Look, there!" and "Can you believe that?" made the experience richer by far. And later when we recalled the experience we would constantly say, "Do you remember..." That is what it is like in collective worship—it is the shared experience of being in the presence of God and remembering and responding to His grace. It's not the same without you. My worship of God is enriched by yours. You sing with reverence about His holiness and I am helped to remember and express my awe at His holiness. You sing with spirit about the joy of forgiveness and I am helped to

remember and express my joy for His forgiveness.

The American flag passes in a parade and all the older men doff their caps and as the national anthem is played, tears stream down their cheeks—the younger people all around slowly remove their caps and stand in awe recognizing that something important is taking place. When you kneel in the presence of God, when you come to complete silence, when you bow your head and refuse distractions in such a holy moment, you teach me about the awesomeness of such a privilege—to be in the presence of God. Your presence here, singing and speaking, reassures me that what I hold to be true and valuable is truly true and valuable. Your presence and testimony confirm my faith and enable my worship. Worship is personal but it is not private—what you do greatly enhances or diminishes my worship. I am troubled with how many people I see each week who appear to be little more than spectators. Maybe they are worshipping privately but I seriously doubt it. Your worship is personal but it is not private—*"Come, let **US** worship the Lord..."*

## **Worship requires variety to give it the richness God deserves.**

No *one* of us is capable of expressing the worship that is due our God. Not one of us has had all the experiences that reflect His goodness. Not any one age group or any other group of us can adequately remember and adequately express with sufficient creativity the worship our God deserves. But we forget that too easily and opposition to the way others express their worship is not new to the church.

One group saw fit to express their disapproval of the new music entering the church in these words: "There are

several reasons for opposing it: It's too new. It's too worldly, even blasphemous. The new Christian music is not as pleasant as the more established style and because there are so many new songs you can't learn them all. It puts too much emphasis on instrumental music rather than on godly lyrics. This new music creates disturbances, making people act disorderly. The preceding generation got along without out." These comments were made in 1723 and there were made in criticism of Isaac Watts who wrote *Joy to the World* and *I Sing the Mighty Power of God*.

***Your presence and testimony confirm my faith and enable my worship. Worship is personal but it is not private.***

They were made because Watts was encouraging congregations to sing hymns in the church.<sup>11</sup> These are the people who have forgotten that the infinity of our God deserves an ever-changing, ever-creative expression of worship. No *one* music style, *not several* music styles, can possibly express all the glory of our God.

But it is not only the conservatives who are limiting worship by their opposition to the more contemporary. It is also those who want more contemporary music who limit the worship of God by their refusal of the traditional. C.S. Lewis wrote: "I very much disliked (the church) hymns, which I considered to be fifth-rate poems set to sixth-rate music. But as I went on I saw the great merit of it.... I realized that the hymns (which were just sixth-rate music) were, nevertheless, being sung with devotion and benefit by an old saint in elastic-side boots in the opposite pew, and then you realize that you aren't fit to clean those boots. It gets you out of your solitary conceit."

Is God more pleased with hymns than choruses, more pleased with Michael W. Smith than Charles Wesley? When I look at Psalm 98 or Psalm 150 I see worship with a variety as great as: *"harp, singing, trumpets, ram's horns, rivers clapping, mountains singing, tambourines, dancing, strings and flutes and crashing cymbals."* The issue isn't what kind of music do we like, but what kind of worship does God like. And God likes worship from the heart—and worship from the heart will be as creative and varied as we are able because the bigness of our God can only be reflected in that way.

I am tired of the worship wars. I am tired of trying to please people by selecting the music *they* will like, of making certain the heating, cooling, sound and chairs are comfortable, of balancing the demands for more spirited, lively, engaging, in-your-face music with the demands for more reflective, devotional, quietness-of-the-heart music. I want to meet God and I want to meet Him with you. I want to know His presence—to be reminded of His greatness and grace. I want to be with Him, to enjoy His closeness and to know the security of His love. I want to express to Him my affection and admiration and exuberant adulation. And I want to do it with you.

What would we do if Jesus chose to physically appear at our church on a Sunday morning? I would stop talking—you and I would not be needed to speak His word. I think we would also instinctively kneel—only the truly infirm would not go to their knees. We would ask His forgiveness. And when He pulled us to our feet, we would delight in hearing Him tell how much He loves us and that it was His love for us that took Him to the cross. We would ask Him to remind us about the future and He would. Then we would be unable to contain ourselves as we told how much we respect and love Him. And the longer we spent in His



presence the more likely we would tell stories about His provision for us in the past. Like the family gathered at Grandma and Grandpa's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, everyone could hardly wait to tell why they appreciate Him. "I remember when..." The stories of the past would be told and retold with the subtle but important differences that were each person's experience with Jesus.

Somebody would remember a song that expressed our thoughts and love so well and we would gladly sing it. The style, instruments, and tempo would make no difference because these are personal expressions of love and thanks, which we are using as our own. Little kids would be allowed to sing or read even though the words or melodies weren't all that sophisticated or even that well done. No one would be judging the music for its quality but for its intent. And all of us would be saying, "Yes, that's what I feel too, Jesus." And it would happen because: *Worship is about God*, it is not about us. *Worship is a relationship and a lifestyle* before it is a Sunday experience. *Worship has both content and emotion*. *Worship is personal but it is not private* – we need each other. *Worship is as varied* as the expanse and creativity of our God.

## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Anderson, *In Search of Wonder*, p. 8
- <sup>2</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship*, p. 27
- <sup>3</sup> Mark Horst as quoted in Anderson, p. 76
- <sup>4</sup> D.A. Carson, p. 15
- <sup>5</sup> James L Christiansen, *Don't Waste your Time in Worship*
- <sup>6</sup> Albert Day, *Existence under God*
- <sup>7</sup> Anderson, p. 15-16
- <sup>8</sup> William Willimon, *With Glad and Generous Hearts*, p. 63
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 60
- <sup>10</sup> *Denver Post*, Wednesday, August 21, 1999
- <sup>11</sup> David Hocking, *The Joy of Worship*, p. 23-24

## Chapter Three

### Sing for Joy

A lot of feeling, sometimes very angry feelings are aroused by and about music. Why? Because most of us feel strongly about music. And because music is so powerful. It is powerful to express emotions and we understand that it is powerful to impress them. Martin Luther wrote, "Next to Theology, I give the first and highest honor to music." Henry Halley in Halley's Bible Handbook wrote, " It was the public singing of Luther's hymns that bore his preaching over central Europe and shook the world into the Reformation...The way now to rejuvenate dead churches would be to sing them into life."<sup>2</sup>

Music is powerful. What great movement of history hasn't been accompanied by music? None that I know of. Whether it is a movement for evil as in Nazi Germany or a movement for good as in 1800's Abolition and 1960's Civil Rights, they were all energized with music. Music and singing are a part of life. They are as integral to life as breathing and eating. Music is not only an integral part of life in general it is also an integral part of the spiritual life of a Christian. I think I could prove that there are more or at least as many references to our "making music to God" as to our praying or witnessing. Interesting isn't it, that we often speak of our responsibility as Christians to read the Bible and pray and share our faith but seldom think of our responsibility to sing to God.

Take a moment to read I Chronicles 15 and 16. In it we see a very picturesque passage of Scripture. David is the King of Israel. Israel is a major power in the Middle East. Under David's leadership, Israel controls the territories of what are

now Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. What strikes you as a major method of worship in this passage? Music, of course; uninhibited joy and praise of God expressed mainly through music. As we study the subject of worship, we emphasize that repentance is the beginning of worship and that worship is meeting with God and expressing our love to Him. Worship also contains music and I want to discuss the central place it holds in worship. I want you to think in terms of the music you make to God. First I want you to think about why music is so important in our worship of God and second, I want us to think about how we make music to God.

## Music is Important

First, why is music so important in our worship?

1. Music most adequately expresses our deepest emotions to God. The emotions of strife, anger, malice, and hatred are not well expressed in music. But love, joy, excitement, even sadness and grief are expressed at their best in music and words set to music. What better expresses the emotion of adoration than the proper words set to the appropriate music?

"Fairest Lord Jesus" or "Alleluia" What better expresses love than setting our thoughts to song? "Jesus the Very Thought of Thee" or the chorus "I Love You, Lord" What better expresses awe and majestic wonder than the "Hallelujah Chorus" or "Majesty"? Here is how the Psalmist David expressed it in song: *"I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a **new song** in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God."* (Psalm 40)

God made us and God made music, understanding that thoughts set to music would draw out the deepest emotions and express them. Music is important in our worship because it most adequately expresses our deepest emotions to God.

2. Music is essential to our spiritual growth. Apart from actually experiencing something, nothing else but music so powerfully engages the mind and impresses truth upon it. If you want to teach anything today what do you do? Put it to music. If you want to influence anyone today what do you do? Put your ideas to music. 20th Century advertisers didn't invent that!

God had much of the history of Israel committed to music in the Psalms. Putting the truths of our God's existence and His work in our lives to music is the surest way of impressing them upon our minds. The repetition of those truths confirms us in our faith. Paul and Silas confirmed this in their prison songs that told of God's truth and care. What sustains, encourages, and revives? The truth of God's love and power. And what communicates it to the heart and soul better than anything else? Music.

***Music is not only an integral part of life in general, it is also an integral part of the spiritual life of a Christian.***

Music more than anything else connects us to the church down through the ages. We are part of the church of Christ and not just the church at SGC, nor even in America today but the church of David, of Jeremiah, of Luke, of John, of Assisi, of Luther, of Wesley, of Watts, of Crosby, of Sankey, of Crouch, of Chapman, and of many others. Over 3000 years of those who've gone before us.

Music more than anything else unites us as believers in a spirit of oneness. In music we find and express our common heritage and emotions. Together we stand united in our praise of our God through music.

Music is essential to our spiritual growth. It was Mike Andrus of St. Louis who said recently, and I agree with him, "There is an amazing correlation between enthusiastic singing and a person's walk with Christ. People who just sit and look around when hymns and worship songs are being sung or who mouth the words with little feeling are almost invariably people who demonstrate little intimacy with Christ and little productivity in ministry. On the other hand, those who sing zealously from their hearts, allowing the music to (express) their emotions...are generally people whose spiritual lives tend to be vibrant and genuine."<sup>3</sup>

***Throughout Scripture that "praise" is usually love for God expressed in music. Making music to God is not optional for the worshipping believer!***

Music honors our God. Can you think of any command given more frequently in the Scriptures than the command to sing to our God? Psalm 33:1-3 says, "*Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.*" And, Psalm 66:1-2 says, "*Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious!*"

Is it an Old Testament command only? No. Jesus and the disciples sang praise to God. Paul and his companions sang to God. Paul instructed the churches to sing. James talks

about it. And in Revelation it is clear that singing will be one of our eternal occupations. In every part of the New Testament (The Gospels, Acts, the letters to specific churches, the general letters and the book of Revelation) singing is demonstrated or commanded.

Look with me at Ephesians 5:19-20:

*"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Could any command be clearer? Hardly! Nothing honors God more than obedience.

Listen to Hebrews 13:15: *"Let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise."* And throughout Scripture that "praise" is usually love for God expressed in music. Making music to God is not optional for the worshipping believer!

- Through music we grow,
- Through music we express our deepest emotions to God
- Through music our God is honored.

## **The Music We Make**

The second thing I want us to think about is how we make music to God as an expression of our love. The first instruction in how to make music to God is to sing! I want to give you a crash course in singing: SING! How do you make music to God? Just sing. You do not have to be able to carry a tune—though with practice most everyone can. You do not have to sound the best, just your best. This is to your God.

This is a singing church. It has been known for its music and singing since very near its beginning over 40 years ago. I thank God for that! Oh, I urge you to join in when we sing. Don't stand there and not enter in. Don't sit in the pew and rebelliously refuse to participate or embarrassingly

mumble your way through. Sing!

Read Wesley's "Directions for Singing":

- Sing them exactly as they are printed here, without altering or mending them at all; and if you have learned to sing them otherwise, unlearn it as soon as you can.
- Sing all. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up, and you will find it a blessing.
- Sing modestly. Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation, that you may not destroy the harmony; but strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear melodious sound.
- Sing in time. Whatever time is sung be sure to keep with it. Do not run before nor stay behind it; but attend close to the leading voices, and move therewith as exactly as you can; and take care not to sing too slow. This drawling way naturally steals on all who are lazy; and it is high time to drive it out from us, and sing all our tunes just as quick as we did at first.<sup>4</sup>

What about you? Will you make music to God? Then sing!

The second thing about HOW to make music to God is to sing with enthusiasm and understanding Listen again to Wesley: "Sing lustily and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan."<sup>5</sup>



In 1645 in Scotland the pastors published a directory for public worship of God. In it they had a section of the singing of psalms: "It is the duty of Christians to praise God publicly by singing of songs together in the congregation and also privately in the family. In singing the songs, the voice is to be tunable...ordered; but the chief care must be to sing with understanding, and with grace in the heart, making melody unto the Lord."<sup>6</sup>

Or again as Wesley instructed: "Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven."<sup>7</sup>

***In every part of the New Testament,  
singing is demonstrated or commanded.***

Though we benefit by singing, as I noted earlier, the chief purpose of singing is not for our benefit but for God's. Music in worship is not primarily for us—to make us feel good, but rather to express our love to God. God must be the object of our singing and our hearts must be intending what we sing. Thoughtlessly mouthing the words must be an insult to our God.

Lastly, I want to say, as much as it is a genuine expression of your emotions, sing with you whole body. Do you remember the passage in I Chronicles 15? Did you notice the variety in musical expressions of worship: voices, instruments, marching, dancing? It appears that often in the Scriptures when people made music to God they did so

not only with voice and instrument but also with their whole body. At Southern Gables Church there are times when clapping the hands as we sing is very appropriate. In the Bible we find hand clapping as a way to honor a king, rejoice in victory, and to express joy in God. I have a concern when our hand clapping seems to be more of a comment on the performance of a musician than an

***There seems to be little doubt that down through the centuries the people of God often raised their hands as expressions of their dependence and praise.***

expression of joy to God or agreement with the content or emotion of the song. Secular performers bask in and bow to the applause. Godly musicians glory in their Lord and lead their listeners to do the same. It is so easy to copy the world who honors its performers rather than the God who enabled them. When we clap let it be genuinely to our God.

In the Bible we find hand raising as a way to do several things:

- Show respect for God's Word
- Indicate prayer to God (lifting an open hand to receive) and to,
- express praise to God (lifting the arm in indication of who we are honoring)

There seems to be little doubt that in the Temple, in the Synagogues, in the early church and down through the centuries the people of God often raised their hands as expressions of their dependence and praise. I want people at Southern Gables Church to have the freedom to lift their hands in prayer and praise as often as that motion expresses genuine worship and not just hollow ritual.

Should we dance before the Lord? Again there is no doubt that Scripture indicates that dancing before the Lord as a means of putting the whole body into an expression of joy and adoration was common. Moses, David, and Jeremiah all speak of it. The difficulty today is that dancing has become associated not with adoration of the Lord but with adoration of the human body and oftentimes with adoration of sexuality. David's dance as the Ark was brought into Jerusalem was an unselfconscious expression of joy not a self-conscious exhibition of his physical agility or sexual attractiveness. I get the sense that his dancing was more nearly a jumping or skipping for joy. And when any of you are so filled with joy before the Lord that you cannot keep from moving, move, but never out of control as we learn from the Bible. If it were possible to again have a genuine expression of joy and adoration of the Lord through dance, I would be all in favor.

Why do I want us to be a church that sings? Mainly because our God deserves it; it is His command. Because we need it; through music we are affirmed and grow. And, because nothing so adequately expresses our emotions of love for our God. How do we make music to our God?

- We must sing,
- We must sing enthusiastically and with understanding,
- We must sing with our whole body.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> David Hocking, *The Joy of Worship*, p. 23-4

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Mike Andrus, from an unpublished sermon on July, 1991

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.gbod.org/worship/default.asp>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> *The Directory for the Public Worship of God—Of Singing of Psalms.*

<sup>7</sup> Wesley, Ibid

## Chapter Four

### Principles of Worship

#### Principle #1

#### **Unity in Diversity—Many Members yet one Body.**

An important way to express our oneness in Christ is in our worship—all ages worshipping together (“Unified” worship). Galatians 3:28 – “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 – “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.”

For several years there has been a trend to tailor worship to meet the expectations of various age groups. But we are guided by a principle that says worship will not be about Builders, Boomers, Busters or Millenials but about the people of God, of all ages, called Southern Gables. Our worship should not be driven by what music or style or loudness or softness we like best. Mark Horst wrote, “As soon as we come to worship looking for and expecting an experience, we have violated the most basic principle of (worship). We easily become religious aesthetes capable of judging the entertainment value of a church service while remaining unaware of the reality it can open us to. Unfortunately for us, when our worship becomes self-conscious rather than God-conscious, it points not to God’s reality but (only to) our own.”<sup>1</sup>

There are many places in the life of a church where groups based on age or life experience are both appropriate and necessary. We think there is value in our youth congregating separately for the purpose of study and fellowship that is unique to their age and place in life. Likewise, there are times when men meeting with men or women meeting with women are helpful ways to minister. But where do we meet together as the diverse yet unified people we are by God's grace? Where do we experience the young and the old, men and women, married and singles, new believers and mature believers coming together? When the people of God are seen worshipping in both the Old and New Testaments, it is not by age grouping, marital status, spiritual maturity, or any other division—it is all of God's people, regardless of differences, coming together to worship the Lord.

"While by nature "birds of a feather flock together," Christ's body invariably includes an unusual combination of quite disparate individuals, who have in common only their faith in and love for Christ. But that is the whole point! In order for corporate worship (unarguably the most important thing the church does together) to accurately reflect the nature and the unity of the body, it must include the people of God in all of their diversity, unified in the worship by the common focus of that worship: the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of glory... It is in our corporate worship of all places, as the most purely God-directed activity of the church, that our unity should be *most* in evidence.<sup>2</sup>

When you read of the worship that will happen at the throne when Christ comes again, it is quite apparent there will be unified worship focused on who God is. We want our worship here and now to reflect the unity that is ours in Christ. "Enthralled in the presence of the living Lord and Savior, we can expect to engage in the most glorious

worship service of all time. No one has any sense of an “order of service.” No one is conscious of any worship “style.” The Father has set matters in order. The Son is the focus of all eyes. The Spirit prompts the singing of songs. From the lips of sinners saved by amazing grace come Hosannas to the King of kings and Lord of lords...”<sup>3</sup>

*“Young men and maidens, old men and children. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted.”* (Psalm 148:12-13)

## **Principle #2**

### **Diversity in Unity—One Body yet many Members**

An important way to express our diversity in Christ is in our worship—appreciating the richness and variety of God’s people worshipping together and honoring one another in doing so (“Blended” worship).

*“Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the Lord* (Psalm 150)

Might I call our God variegated? When I think of the variety God has given his universe, when I think of the colors, textures, sounds, creatures, and all else God has created, I begin to capture something of the infinity of our God. Our worship requires great variety to give it the richness our God deserves. No *one* of us is capable of expressing the worship that is due our God. No one of us has had all the experiences that reflect his goodness. Not any one age

group or any other group of us can adequately remember and adequately express with sufficient creativity the worship our God deserves. But we forget that too easily. Opposition to the way others express their worship is not new to the church. One group saw fit to express their disapproval of the new music entering the church in these words:

"There are several reasons for opposing it: It's too new. It's too worldly, even blasphemous. The new Christian music is not as pleasant as the more established style and because there are so many new songs you can't learn them all. It puts too much emphasis on instrumental music rather than on godly lyrics. This new music creates disturbances, making people act disorderly. The preceding generation got along without out." Those comments were made in 1723 and they were made in criticism of Isaac Watts who wrote "Joy to the World" and "I Sing the Mighty Power of God." They were made because Watts was encouraging congregations to sing hymns in the church.<sup>4</sup> These are the people who have forgotten that the infinity of our God deserves an ever-changing, ever-creative expression of worship.

No *one* music style, *not several* music styles, can possibly express all the glory of our God. C.S. Lewis wrote: "I very much disliked (the church) hymns, which I considered to be fifth-rate poems set to sixth-rate music. But as I went on I saw the great merit of it.... I realized that the hymns (which were just sixth-rate music) were, nevertheless, being sung with devotion and benefit by an old saint in elastic-side boots in the opposite pew, and then you realize that you aren't fit to clean those boots. It gets you out of your solitary conceit." Is God more pleased with hymns than choruses, more pleased with Michael W. Smith than Charles Wesley? When I look at Psalm 98 or Psalm 150 I see worship with a variety as great as: "harp, singing,



trumpets, ram's horns, rivers clapping, mountains singing, tambourines, dancing, strings and flutes and crashing cymbals. The issue isn't "What kind of music do I like", but what kind of worship does God like. And God likes worship from the heart—and worship from the heart will be as creative and varied as we are able.

One church has captured well the attitude that we desire: "Because we value increasing in a humble willingness to support others whose tastes are different than ours, we will put understanding above accusation, forbearance above faultfinding, and Biblical unity above the demand for uniformity. We will create opportunities for God's reality to be conveyed more powerfully by learning to affirm the forms and styles that edify our brothers and sisters. Our relationships of love for each other will lead us to patiently support and rejoice with those who appreciate other styles, believing that God is able to meet us in the context of any Christ-exalting worship style."<sup>5</sup>

We need each other to bring the richness and variety to the worship our God deserves. Psalm 95:6 exhorts, "*Come, let **us** bow down in worship.*"

*"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."* (Philippians 2:3-4)

### **Principle #3** **Worship is for God**

*"Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker."* (Psalm 95:6)

Too often we think of worship mostly or solely in terms of how it impacts us rather than how it impacts God. And we are the losers when we do that. When we seek an experience we may get it but it will be empty and fleeting. Don Carson wrote, "If you seek peace you will not find it; if you seek Christ, you will find peace. If you seek joy, you will not find it; if you seek Christ you will find joy. If you seek the experience of worship you will not find it; if you seek to worship the living God, you will experience" Him."<sup>6</sup> If we think of ourselves as the necessary beneficiaries of worship we won't truly worship. If we think of God as the beneficiary of worship, we will also benefit. One of the major reasons people argue about worship today is that they have the wrong person (themselves) in view. Worship is not about us; it is about God. We want to help people come into the presence of God and allow them time to interact with Him. We want people to consciously, intentionally think about God and engage Him in singing, praying, listening to His word, and vicariously interacting with Him through the testimonies of other.

We want to meet God together. We want to know His presence—to be reminded of His greatness and grace. We want to be with Him, to enjoy His closeness—to know the security of His love. We want to express to Him our affection and admiration and exuberant adulation. And we want to do this together. Worship is about God.

#### **Principle #4** **Worship is a response to revelation.**

Our worship, including our songs, must be so biblical that they reveal God as He has revealed Himself so that we may respond to Him and not to a caricature of Him. The church has a rich history of such creeds, readings and songs and by God's grace new expressions of the timeless truths of

God are being written in each generation. Look at Colossians 3:16-17 (NASB):

*"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom **teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.** And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."*

I think Colossians 3:16-17 captures an idea that is expressed throughout the rest of the Bible that our songs should do two things, they should *teach* us and they should allow us to *express* our heartfelt emotion to God. Any song will be judged not by how it makes us feel but by how well it expresses the great truths about our God *and* how well it allows us to thank our God for them. It seems that the Psalms and the other songs of the Bible are at least a model for us of what our songs should be. Singing was to be a means of teaching us about God *and* expressing our response to Him. In my study I haven't found one Psalm of praise (with the possible exception of Psalm 150) that did not spell out specifically what it was *about God* that caused the praise. Not every song can convey everything about God *but every song should convey something, something that will elevate our understanding of God's person or work.*

Jesus touches on the same idea when He says to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:23-24, *"... a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and truth."* The "spirit" here is not the human spirit but the Holy Spirit. "Spirit and truth" is one inseparable concept. It is worship empowered by the Spirit and *informed* by truth, the Revelation of God

himself. But as I said, our songs should not only teach us *about* God, they should allow us to express our emotion to God. Again see Colossians 3:16: "*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.***"

Worship is heartfelt! I don't mean it must necessarily be showy but it must be authentic. Praise is not so much an action as a reaction. Just as we pity those who are in love with love, so we would pity those who are enthralled with praise. I want us to encounter God; He will enthrall us and we will respond. That is why I say I want our worship leading to put people into the presence of God and leave them there. "*Sir, we would see Jesus!*" (John 12:21 KJV)

I will say it again: Our worship, including our songs, must be so biblical that they reveal God as He has revealed Himself so that we may respond to Him and not to a caricature of Him. The church has a rich history of such creeds, readings and songs and by God's grace new expressions of the timeless truths of God are being written in each generation

*"Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day."* (Psalm 96:2)

(Illustrations of the principle are given in Appendix A)

## **Principle #5**

### **Worship Themes Should be Determined by Doctrine.**

Because we believe worship is response to revelation (God reveals Himself in His word and we respond to Him—see Principle #4), our worship each week will center on a particular aspect of God's person and/or work. In order to

teach and respond to the broad range of truth about our God, our worship themes are drawn from our doctrinal statement, which reflects our understanding of the essential biblical truths about God's person and work. The songs we sing should convey enough truth about God to be worth memorizing and singing both privately and publicly. They should reflect the fullness of our God's person and work. Not necessarily on any one Sunday but over many weeks, the songs should reflect the breadth of our God's character and grace.

"I once examined the entire worship music repertoire of my congregation, most of which I had inherited, placing each song under one of three biblical categories: (1) "teaching"; (2) "admonition"; and (3) singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Of some four hundred praise choruses and hymns, I found that most of them fit within category three, with about thirty in category one, and fewer than ten in category two. This may reflect our American spirit—the notion that we are free and that nobody can tell us what to do, least of all a worship leader. A new gnosticism has crept in, convincing us that feeling good is an inextricable component of orthodoxy. Admonition just does not fit "orthopathos," an orthodoxy of shared feelings and experiences.

"Having stumbled onto this feature of my own congregation's worship music diet, I then went to the 150 Psalms to see what the proportions of these categories would be. I read the Psalms with three colored highlighters in hand. I used one highlighter to mark teaching, one for admonition, and one for gratitude to God. More skillful Bible scholars I will anticipate what I found: There was simply no way to separate the categories. Consider Psalm 103. The way we "bless the Lord" is to reel off a *long list* of blessings:

- He forgives all our iniquities
- He heals all our diseases
- He redeems our lives from destruction
- He crowns us with lovingkindness and compassion
- He satisfies our years with good things, and so on

“Later in this psalm, it becomes clear that these blessings are given to those who fear the Lord. Taken together, we have a song of gratitude to God that teaches us about God’s provision and further admonishes us to fear the Lord. This is the nature of true biblical worship music. The glorification of God and the edification of the saints occur concurrently. Worship music functions as an integral part of the teaching ministry. Pulpit preaching has greater power to explain the text more logically, but music has greater power to inculcate the text, to take the text more profoundly into other parts of the hearer’s being.<sup>7</sup>

The words we take upon our lips to sing to God must be true and pleasing to Him. The Cambridge Declaration reminds us that one of the problems we face today is what we sing: “Pastors have neglected their rightful oversight of worship, including the doctrinal content of music.” How can we be sure that the words we sing please God? God has given us direction by giving us in the Bible a whole book as a model for what we are to sing. The Book of Psalms (which in Hebrew is entitled the Book of Praises) provides us with songs that God Himself has inspired. The Psalms should at least function as the model for what we as Christians sing to God.

### **Principle #6**

#### **Worship is both for the head and from the heart.**

Worship is not only correct thoughts *about* God but also

correct thoughts *expressed* to God. Some of the heat generated in the worship wars is over the issues of substance versus style. Some will argue that the old hymns are stuffy and lifeless. Others will argue that the new songs are trite and shallow. Some want content while others want energy. Almost every Psalm in the Old Testament combines passion *with* content. The Psalmist uses emotive words of excitement or reverence to express specific things about the Lord. He wrote, "*My heart yearns for you*" (emotion) *because you are shelter and you are strength* (content)." *Knowledge without emotion is sterile. And emotion without knowledge is futile.* Some people fear emotionalism, others fear deadness. Bishop Moule of England was supposed to have said he finds it easier to tone down a fanatic than to resurrect a corpse. Do you know why we sing so much in church? Because music expresses a range of emotions better than almost any other activity. Or as William Willimon said it, "Prose is usually too confining for the joyful business" of worship."<sup>8</sup>

We are able to take our thoughts (content) and express them to God from our hearts (emotion). Expressed emotions of wild enthusiasm are every bit as valid as emotions of quiet adoration. And conversely, expressed emotions of speechless awe are every bit as valid as dancing before the Lord. Worship has content *and* emotion. C.S. Lewis wrote, "The most obvious fact about praise, whether of God or anything, strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval or the giving of honor. I had not noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise... I had not noticed that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it.... Delight is incomplete until it is expressed..."<sup>9</sup> John Piper added, "There is the solution! We praise what we enjoy because the delight is incomplete until it is

expressed in praise...So if God loves us enough to make our joy full, he must not only give us himself; he must also win from us the praise of our hearts—not because he needs to shore up some weakness in himself or compensate for some deficiency, but because he loves us and seeks the fullness of our joy that can be found only in knowing and praising him, the most magnificent of all Beings.”<sup>10</sup>

**Principle #7**  
**Worship should provide for the Full Range**  
**of Biblical Emotions.**

“Joy *and* reverence reflect the character of God, who is just *and* merciful, holy *and* loving. Worship that is only joyful serves a God stripped of half his attributes...It severs Law from Gospel and repentance from faith.”<sup>11</sup>

Using the Psalms (the Bible’s hymnbook) as our guide, we discover the wide range of moods that form appropriate responses to our God. Thanksgiving, celebration, awe, contemplation, lament, anger, fear, and repentance among others are expressed in the Psalms. Our desire is to provide for a range of emotional responses to match the themes. (e.g. The holiness of God presented in reverential tones while the second coming of Christ is presented in celebrative tones.)

“What do the Psalms teach about song? First, they remind us of the rich variety of songs that we can and should present to God. The Psalms contain joyful praise and thanksgiving. The Psalms are called the Book of Praises because they not only contain but also culminate in the praise of God (see especially Ps. 146-150.) But the Psalms contain more than praise. Some Psalms reflect on creation (for example, Ps. 19 and 104); others recount the great saving work of God in Christ (Ps. 2, 22, 24, and 110); still



others meditate on the perfections of God's revealed Word (especially Ps. 119). There are Psalms of lamentation and repentance (Ps. 32, 51, and 137) as well as Psalms that express the confusion and frustration that God's people sometimes experience living in this fallen world (Ps. 44 and 73). John Calvin rightly observed about the Psalter, 'There is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here presented as in a mirror.' In some churches today it seems that only happy, joyful songs are sung. But joy is not the only emotion that Christians experience. Christian worship needs to provide times when sad or reflective emotions are expressed as well as happy ones. A variety of song texts, as we find them in the Psalter, are crucial for that purpose. Second, the Psalms also model for us the substance of our singing. A few Psalms are short and have repetitive elements, but most are full, rich, profound responses to God and his work. Singing praise to God, the Psalter reminds us, is not just emotional expression, but a real engagement of the mind. Songs that are very repetitive or shallow and sentimental do not follow the model of the Psalter. The command to love God with all our mind must inform our singing. Mind and emotions together are the model of praise presented to us in the Psalms, and the modern church must work at restoring that union where it has been lost."<sup>12</sup>

### **Principle #8**

#### **The music should fit the lyrics.**

Not every song can match the music to the words as well as the "Hallelujah Chorus" or "A Mighty Fortress is our God," but it should be our aim. "What tunes shall we sing? We may use any tune that is singable for a congregation and that supports the content of the song. The tune should reflect the mood and substance of the song in light of the joy and reverence that are appropriate to worship. With

those guidelines in mind (and a sensitivity to the congregation's difficulty with change), the issue of tunes for songs should be resolved smoothly."<sup>13</sup>

### **Principle #9**

**The primary instruments in worship are the voices of the people.**

***"What kind of musical accompaniment is biblical?"*** In Old Testament worship a wide range of instruments was used in the worship of the temple. Yet in the worship of the church it appears that for almost the first thousand years of its history no instruments were used in Christian worship. Today most churches use one or more instruments. But where instruments are used, **the instruments should aid the singing of the congregation, not overwhelm it.** They should contribute to a deep spirit of reverence and joy, not undermine it."<sup>14</sup>

### **Principle #10**

**The music and lyrics should be sing-able by a congregation.**

The lyrics of songs are usually in the form of poetry, which enhances their beauty and enables easier memorization. But care must be given to not use overly unfamiliar or stilted language, which inhibits the understanding and expression. Likewise the music can be too complicated or awkward making it hard to follow or learn. Creativity and even 'beauty' will sometimes be sacrificed to allow for singability.

## **Principle #11**

### **The music and lyrics should be easy to remember.**

What songs will our children and we know from memory in the years to come? What songs will inform their and our thoughts and be the basis of our private worship? I want our worship to become unselfconscious. C.S. Lewis wrote, "As long as you notice and have to count the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance. A good shoe is a shoe you don't have to notice. Good reading becomes possible when you need not consciously think about ...print or spelling. The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God."<sup>15</sup>

## **Principle #12**

### **Musical genre matters.**

Just as contemporary music is to be presented in a contemporary fashion so historic music is to be presented in historic fashion. Much of contemporary music would not sound "right" sung to classical instruments in classical styles. Likewise some of the stately hymns of the past would not sound "right" sung to jazz instruments or distorted guitars and trap sets.

## **Principle #13**

### **An established repertoire of songs greatly aids in reflecting on, responding to and remembering the fullness of God's person and work. (Also see Principles #5 and #7 above)**

Because singing is an important expression of worship, because songs ought to convey truth about God and **because songs are a primary means of teaching the truths of God, it is important that we have a basic**

**repertoire that covers the major aspects of the gospel. Songs and singing are primary means of discipleship.** Luther, Spurgeon, and many others have commented that the hymnal is the second most important book in a Christian's experience because biblical truth set to music is such a powerful tool of instruction.

For these reasons we have developed a "core" list of hymns and other songs that we will sing with greater frequency so that they can hopefully be learned and remembered and become part of the internal spiritual repertoire of the people of SGC.

Charles Spurgeon wrote: "Our congregation has distinctive features which are not suited by any hymnal known to us. We thought it best to issue a (hymnal) which would contain the cream of the books already in use among us, together with the best of all others extant up to the hour of going to press; and having sought a blessing upon the project, we set about it with all our might, and at last have brought it to a conclusion. Our best diligence has been given to the work, and we have spared no expense: may God's richest blessing rest upon the result of our arduous labours! Unto His glory we dedicate *Our Own Hymn-Book*. The range of subjects is very extensive, comprising not only direct praise, but doctrine, experience, and exhortation; thus enabling the saints according to apostolical command to edify one another in their songs. *If any object that some of the hymns are penitential or doctrinal, and therefore unfit to be sung, we reply that we find examples of such in the Book of Psalms, which we have made our model in compiling or work; there we have Maschils as well as hosannahs, and penitential odes as well as hallelujahs. We have not been able to fall in with modern scruples, but have rested content with ancient precedents. We have not cast about for models suggested by the transient fancy of*

*the hour, but have followed the indications given us the word of God and in the long-established usage of the universal church; desiring to be obedient to the sacred precept, 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord'.*"<sup>16</sup>

## **Principle #14**

### **The Word of God is Central in Worship.**

#### **In Preaching:**

Preaching will be thoughtful exposition and explication of the word. Paul wrote to Pastor Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2-5 saying, *"Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear."*

In Nehemiah's day we read, *"They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read."* (Nehemiah 8:8) It is true that sermons should be true, clear, interesting and relevant but they must also be substantive. We will not cater to the idea that people today cannot listen to intelligent speech, cannot understand the English language, cannot learn except through pictures or movies, and that everything must be a felt experience.

"The unspoken but increasingly common assumption of today's Christendom is that worship is primarily for us—to meet our needs. Such worship services are entertainment focused, and the worshipers are uncommitted spectators

who are silently grading the performance. From this perspective, preaching becomes a homiletics of consensus—preaching to felt needs—man’s conscious agenda instead of God’s. Such preaching is always topical and never textual. Biblical information is minimized, and the sermons are short and full of stories. Anything and everything that is suspected of making the marginal attendee uncomfortable is removed from the service, whether it be a registration card or a ‘mere’ creed. Taken to the nth degree, this philosophy instills a tragic self-centeredness. That is, everything is judged by how it affects (the person). This terribly corrupts one’s theology.”<sup>17</sup>

### **In Reading:**

We will read significant portions of the Holy Scriptures as part of our worship. Nehemiah 8:2 is **descriptive** of the place of scripture reading in worship. *"Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly... (and) He read it aloud from daybreak till noon...in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law."* This second text is **prescriptive**: *"Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching."* (1 Timothy 4:13)

We will not succumb to a sound-byte culture. Just as in a pre-literate culture the Bible had to be read aloud to meet the needs of the people, so in a post-literate culture, when people no longer are willing to read, the Bible needs to be read aloud so that we hear the Word of God.

### **In Singing:**

As stated in Principles # 4 and 5

## **Principle #15**

### **Offerings are a part of corporate worship.**

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, *"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income..."* (1 Corinthians 16:2) We want to give opportunity for God's people to publicly express their gratitude for God's grace by giving sacrificially from what God has given us. Thus we will encourage regular giving in the public worship services as the best expression of the worship of giving.

## **Principle #16**

### **Corporate prayer is an essential part of worship**

In 1 Timothy 2:1 we read, *"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."* Prayers will not be kept short to accommodate the short attention spans of people nor will they be inordinately long just to prove a point and lap over into vain repetitions. Such prayers will often include adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication or petition.

## **Principle #17**

### **We are part of the people of God from history past and need to be reminded of that connection and learn from it.**

We learn from God's people of the past through the creeds, confessions, hymns and writings that have enriched the church for centuries. The Apostles used such material in the very writing of the New Testament. We find them in several places such as Philippians 2 and 2 Timothy 2:11-13.

It seems evident that not only in Scripture but also throughout the ages, short summaries of the faith have been important to God's people to capture the essence of their faith and make it easily remembered. I desire for all of us to have at least some of these summaries committed to memory. Many have asked why we recite the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Great Command and the Lord's Prayer. It is because we need a ready answer for certain fundamental questions that get raised by every generation.

Emmanuel Kant asked:

- What can I know? (Creed)
- What shall I do? (Commandments)
- What may I hope? (Prayer)

Thomas Aquinas said we must know:

- What to believe.
- How to live.
- What to pray for.

These are the core issues of life and they are answered in the Creed, the Commandments and the Prayer—answers that come from the love of God to His “cross”-loved people.<sup>18</sup> As noted above, the hymns of the church (past) are a significant part of that literature with which the church (present) needs to connect. Our worship is enriched by the worship of the past.

## **Principle #18**

### **The Lord's Supper is central to our worship**

The Lord's Supper is a central expression of the Gospel message on which our lives depend and for which our praise is greatest. Luke 22:19 says, *"This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."* (Cf 1 Corinthians 11) A preacher cannot preach all the important themes and



texts of the Bible and still adequately address the cross and resurrection in every sermon. Therefore, by celebrating communion more often we can more often focus our attention on that great central theme of the gospel.

Communion is also an important means of grace. As we participate in the Lord's Supper, humbly seeking the Lord Jesus in faith, He comes to us in the bread and cup. No, He is not *physically* present, but He is really, truly and personally *spiritually* present. Pastor and theologian, Robert Letham, wrote, "Thus in the (Lord's Supper) the Holy Spirit unites the faithful (people) to the person of Christ as they eat and drink the signs, the physical elements of bread and wine. There is an inseparable (joining) of sign and reality. As truly as we eat the bread and drink the wine, so we feed on Christ by faith...The role of those who take the bread and cup is, therefore, to believe and receive."<sup>19</sup>

When we eat the bread and drink the wine, Jesus says it is like eating His flesh and drinking His blood. In other words, by faith we are taking Him in, trusting Him, reaffirming our faith, declaring anew our belief and trust in Him. And in that He ministers His grace to us to believe. There is a mysterious synergy in this that we cannot fully explain. He offers us Himself in the bread and cup. We obey and eat and drink, believing Him. He ministers His grace to us to trust Him more fully.

Dr. Jerry Nelson  
Southern Gables Church

## End Notes

- 1 Mark Horst, (Pastor Excelsior UMC of Excelsior, MN) source lost
- 2 Ron Mann in "Blended Worship – Good for the Body"
- 3 Bill Bright, *The Journey Home*, p. 155
- 4 David Hocking, *The Joy of Worship*, p. 23-24
- 5 Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN
- 6 D.A. Carson, *Worship By the Book*, p. 15
- 7 Leonard Payton, *How Shall we Sing to God?*, p. 2
- 8 William Wilomon, *With Glad and Generous Hearts*, p. 60
- 9 *Reflections on the Psalms* p. 93-95 in Piper p. 37
- 10 John Piper, *Desiring God*, p. 37
- 11 W. Robert Godfrey "The Reformation of Worship" in *Here We Stand* by Boice and Sasse, 1996
- 12 Robert Godfrey, *Pleasing God in our Worship*
- 13 Ibid
- 14 Ibid
- 15 C.S. Lewis, *Letter to Malcolm*, p. 4
- 16 Charles Spurgeon from preface to "Our Own Hymnal."
- 17 Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, p. 106
- 18 Peter Kreeft, *Knowing the Truth of God's Love, 1988*, p. 44-47
- 19 Robert Letham, *The Lord's Supper*, p. 28-29

## Appendix A

### Additional Notes on Worship

#### Resources:

*Blended Worship Good for the Body* by Ron Mann  
*Congregational Singing and the Ministry of the Word*  
by Leonard Payton  
*Pleasing God in our Worship: The Reformation of Worship*  
by Robert Godfrey  
*Biblical Worship* Douglas VanDorn  
*Worship by the Book* by D.A. Carson  
*Discipling Music Ministry* by Calvin Johansson  
*A Royal Waste of Time and Reaching Out without Dumbing  
Down* by Marva Dawn  
*The Ultimate Priority* by John MacArthur  
*In Search of Wonder* by Anderson  
*Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper* by VanderZee  
*Keeping the Sabbath Wholly* by Marva Dawn

#### Illustrations of Revelation and Response

A song that contains revelation and response:

#### **O Worship the King**

O worship the King, all glorious above  
O gratefully sing His wonderful love  
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days  
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise

You alone are the matchless King  
To You alone be all majesty  
Your glories and wonder, what tongue can recite?  
You breathe in the air, You shine in the light

O measureless might, ineffable love  
While angels delight to worship above  
Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end  
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend.

The following is one that, from my perspective, **doesn't include** "revelation" and response—it is all response, but to what?

### **Let My Words Be Few**

You are God in heaven  
And here am I on earth  
So I'll let my words be few  
Jesus I am so in love with You  
And I'll stand in awe of You  
Yes I'll stand in awe of You  
And I'll let my words be few  
Jesus I am so in love with You  
The simplest of all love songs  
I want to bring to You  
So I'll let my words be few  
Jesus I am so in love with You  
(Chorus)(Chorus)  
And I'll let my words be few  
Jesus, I am so in love with You.

Here's another song that doesn't match the above principles.

### **Draw Me Close**

Draw me close to you, never let me go,  
I lay it all down again,  
To hear You say that I'm Your friend.  
You are my desire, no one else will do,  
'Cause no one else can take Your place,  
To feel the warmth of Your embrace

Help me find the way, bring me back to you.  
You're all I want,  
You're all I've ever needed,  
You're all I want,  
Help me know You are near.  
(Repeat several times)

Who are we talking about in the above song, God or some lost lover? What I have discovered is that many “praise” choruses are only response. They put response into words but they don't tell us what we are responding to—they don't tell us much about our God. **My contention is that we won't have to tell people as much how to respond if we show them God. The words of a worship song should follow the biblical pattern that praises God for something—for His character and His works.**

Let me show you two other songs that illustrate the unfortunate difference between songs that say something and those that don't.

### **Our Great Savior**

Jesus! What a friend for sinners  
Jesus! Lover of my soul  
Friends may fail me, foes assail me,  
He, my Savior makes me whole.

Jesus! What a strength in weakness!  
Let me hide myself in Him;  
Tempted, tried, and sometimes failing,  
He, my strength, my victory wins.

Jesus! What a help in sorrow!  
While the billows o'er me roll,  
Even when my heart is breaking,  
He, my comfort, helps my soul

## What a Friend I've Found

What a friend I've found,  
Closer than a brother;  
I have felt Your touch,  
More intimate than lovers.

Jesus, Jesus,

Jesus, friend forever.

What a hope I've found,  
More faithful than a mother;  
It would break my heart,  
To ever lose each other.

(chorus) (verse 1-instrumental)

(chorus) (chorus) (chorus)

What a friend I've found,  
Closer than a brother.

(chorus)

"Genuine worship is a response to divine truth. It is passionate because it arises out of our love for God. But to be true worship it must also arise out of a correct understanding of his law, his righteousness, his mercy and his being. Real worship acknowledges God as he has revealed himself in his word." (John MacArthur, "How Shall We Then Worship" in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, p.184)

### Commentary on Colossians 3:16

Colossians 3:16 *"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with **psalms** and **hymns** and **spiritual songs**, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."*

**Psalms** quite admittedly refers to the Older Testament Psalms.

**Hymns** might be a synonym for the Psalms (The word is used that way in the LXX and in such passages as 2 Samuel 6:5; 22:1) but just as likely is a reference to Christians songs, some of which we find in the New Testament - e.g. Philippians 2:6-10

*"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,  
but made himself nothing,  
taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.  
And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to death-  
even death on a cross!  
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth."*

(Cf. Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 5:14; Luke 1 Magnificat and Benedictus.)

It is apparent from church history that hymns other than the Psalms were used in the church.

**Spiritual songs** might be unpremeditated, spontaneous, words sung "in the Spirit." For example, Revelation 4:11:

*"You are worthy, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they were created  
and have their being."*

Revelation 5:9,12,13:

*"You are worthy to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
because you were slain,*

*and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.*

*"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise! To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"*

And in all three kinds of songs, singing it is to be done in gratitude, thankfulness to God. It expresses and elicits praise of God. It doesn't praise "praise" or just make the singer feel good; it flows out of gratitude and expresses it to God. And that it is "in your hearts" means it is rooted in personal experience—it is heart worship not just lip service.

The **instructional and meditation** value of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs has been recognized throughout the generations. The Levitical musicians of the Older Testament wrote the songs, led the people in worship in the Temple but the rest of the year they were scattered throughout Israel very likely teaching the great truths of God through their music. A Levitical musician didn't reach maturity until age 30 (unlike the unspecialized Levite) as we see in 1 Chronicles 23:3, 5, and 24. Songs that spoke of who God is and what He has done have accompanied every revival of spiritual life in the past 2000 years. The monastic orders of the middle ages, the reformation, the revivals of Whitfield and Wesley, even the Jesus People movement of the 60s and 70s. Every major movement of the Spirit of God has been accompanied by music that taught the truths of God. Luther, Wesley, Spurgeon and others knew that the Hymn book (meaning the body of songs that the people sang) was second only to the Bible in importance to spiritual vitality of the people.



## Other Quotes on Worship

D. G. Hart in an article entitled, "Post-Modern Evangelical Worship—"Indeed, contemporary worship—and church life for that matter—depends increasingly on the products of pop culture... Rather than growing up and adopting the broader range of experience that characterizes adulthood, evangelicals...want to recover and perpetuate the experiences of adolescence." (Calvin Theological Journal 3- (1995) 454)

"To great sections of the church the art of worship has been lost entirely, and in its place has come that strange and foreign thing called the 'program.' This word has been borrowed from the stage and applied with sad wisdom to the type of public service which now passes for worship among us." (A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, p. 9)

We don't think of how we can get worship "over with" but how we can set aside a day to reflect on our God, gather with his people, and do acts of service. A Sabbath is a privilege not a chore.

"The true, the genuine worship is when (people), through their spirits, attain to friendship and intimacy with God. True and genuine worship is not to come to a certain place; it is not to go through a certain ritual or liturgy; it is not even to bring a certain gift. True worship is when the spirit, the immortal and invisible part of (the person) speaks to and meets with God, who is immortal and invisible." (William Barclay, *The Gospel of John, Vol. 1*, p. 154)

"It is not very sound theology to confine a man's thoughts so much to himself, and not to set before him, as the prime motive of his existence, zeal to illustrate the glory of God. For we are born first of all for God, and not for ourselves." (John Calvin, *Reply to Sadoleto*, p. 58)



## Appendix B

### Additional Resources on Sabbath

#### Bibliography:

Resources for practical application to our individual and family lives: Dawn, Marva, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly* (application of Sabbath principle to all of life)

Mains, Karen *Making Sunday Special*, Word, 1987

Somewhat more detailed works:

Douma, J. *The Ten Commandments* especially chapter "The Fourth Commandment" (good history of Sabbath keeping)

Carson, D.A. (editor) *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, c1982. BV111.F76  
(Rather technical but essential)

Sproul, R.C. editor, *Soli Deo Gloria*, Chapter 12 by James Dennison (helpful modern day Puritan application building from the work of Jonathan Edwards)

#### Still other resources:

Swartley, Willard *Slavery, War, and Women: Case issues in Biblical Interpretation*, Herald Press, 1983 (especially pages 65-95) (Saturday to Sunday among Christians-an excellent overview)

Ray, Bruce, *Celebrating the Sabbath: Finding Rest in a Restless World*.

Bunyan, John, 1628-1688. *A defense of the doctrine of justification by faith; A confession of my faith and a reason of my practice; differences in judgment about water-baptism, no bar to communion; peaceable principles and true; a case of conscience resolved; Questions about the nature and perpetuity of the seventh-day Sabbath.* Oxford : Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. BR75.B73 1976 vol. 4

Dennison, James T., 1943 *The Market day of the Soul: The Puritan doctrine of the Sabbath in England 1532-1700* Lanham, MD: University Press of America, c1983. BV111.D46  
(More detailed version of chapter in *Soli Deo Gloria*)

Odom, Robert Leo, *Sunday and Sabbath in Early 1901 Washington: Review and Herald Pub. Association,* c1977. BV111.O33

Haynes, Carlyle Boynton, 1882-1958 *From Sabbath to Sunday: a discussion of the historical aspects of the Sabbath question, showing how, when, why, and by whom the change was made from seventh to the first day of the week* Washington, D.C. Review and Herald, [c1928] BV125.H38

SERMON XV Jonathan Edwards: "THE PERPETUITY AND CHANGE OF THE SABBATH."

### **Other Comments and Quotes:**

The Bible does not say Sabbath was *instituted* at creation but that later Sabbath observance (Mt. Sinai forward) was *grounded* in creation.

Sabbath was instituted for God's people; it is not a law for

all people (for non Jews and non-Christians) even though it obviously has value for all.

### **Public Worship in the New Testament is set on the first day of the week:**

The resurrection was on the first day of the week. The followers of Jesus met on the first day of the week.

*Acts 20:7- "On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight."* John refers to this as "The Lord's Day"

Revelation 1:10 - *"On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit..."*

1 Corinthians 16:2- *"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."*

"The claim exerted upon Christian life and thought by Christ's resurrection simply implied that believers would most naturally use Sunday to commemorate Christ's resurrection. The transition from Sabbath to Sunday was not arbitrary, but flowed from the authority of the One who called himself Lord of the Sabbath and who was the fulfillment of the Sabbath. For this reason the treasure of the fourth commandment could not possibly remain tied to the Jewish Sabbath but required the celebration of another day, namely, The Lord's Day." (Douma, 138)

From the beginning, Sunday was consciously referred to as "the Lord's Day." Rev 1:10

The Didache (c. A.D. 100) and Ignatius wrote that Christians "no longer observe (Saturday), but direct their

lives toward the Lord's Day, on which our life is refreshed by him and by his death."

Justin Martyr (A.D. 150) refers to "Sunday" as the day when the believers gathered together.

Dionysius of Corinth (A.D. 170) speaks of the holy Lord's Day.

Tertullian (A.D. 200) said Sunday was a day of joy for believers. (Douma 139)

### **Law must be seen in the context of grace in the Old Testament as much as in the New Testament.**

The fact that the commandments also showed the people how much they needed God's mercy and grace does not mean the commandments were not to be taken seriously. God expected His people to keep the commandments but to do so not legalistically but in love—increasingly depending on the Lord to enable them to obey Him.

The fact that the teachers of the Law had turned it into a sham, a mere pretense of its intention, does not nullify the commandment itself. Jesus was not a commandment breaker, He was a commandment clarifier.

It doesn't seem Jesus set out to be an iconoclast but when He ran into perversions of the law that would have prevented Him from His father's work, He did not hesitate to break such laws. eg. Healing on the Sabbath, etc. Throughout Mark 2 we see Jesus clarifying the issue of Sabbath (rejecting legalism but not breaking the real law).

## **From Saturday to Sunday?**

The earliest indications are that Christians also continued to observe Sabbath-rest on Saturday. That they met on Sunday evening for worship as Christ-followers may have been out of convenience rather than any sense of changing Sabbath (6<sup>th</sup> day) to Sunday. It is even reasonable to assume that they spent Sunday working, as did everyone else until Constantine. (Douma, 111)

Not until 321 was Sunday declared, by Constantine, a day of rest. (Douma, 111) But even then it was not uniformly observed as the day of worship. Some Christians continued to meet on Sabbath and others on Sunday.

The practice of Sunday worship for Christians instead of Saturday worship was well established among Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians within a very few years of Christ's resurrection. By the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D. Sunday was clearly the designated day of worship for Christians AND there is no record of controversy on this subject—it was wholly accepted.  
(Bauckham in Carson, 236)

The council of Orleans (538) prohibited work on Sunday but did not prohibit travel, meal preparation, personal grooming, etc. (Douma, 112)

It wasn't until the Middle Ages that theologians began to argue Sunday worship was connected to Sabbath-keeping.

Is it possible that Sunday worship has no connection to Saturday Sabbath but definite connection to the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment (one-day-in-seven)? The form of honoring the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment (Saturday to Sunday) has changed but not the function (ceasing from work and giving even

more attention to corporate worship and kingdom work).

“There are familiar social institutions and patterns which are generally recognized not only as undoubtedly Christian in origin but also as having had beneficial effects right down to our own time. One of the most important of these institutions is the Sunday holiday. The heathen world had no Sunday. Neither the peoples of classical antiquity nor our barbarian ancestors had any such holiday recurring regularly at short intervals.” (Th. Zahn in Jan Lochman’s *Signposts to Freedom*, p 59)

### **Westminster Larger Catechism:**

**Q117.** How is the sabbath or the Lord's day to be sanctified?

**A.** The sabbath or Lord's day is to be sanctified by an holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful; and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God's worship: and, to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose and seasonably dispatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.

The Westminster emphasizes ceasing from literal work and recreation.

### **Heidelberg Catechism**

**Question 103.** What does God require in the fourth commandment?

**Answer:** First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained; (a) and that I, especially on the sabbath, that is, on the day of rest, diligently frequent the



church of God, (b) to hear his word, (c) to use the sacraments, (d) publicly to call upon the Lord, (e) and contribute to the relief of the poor. (f) Secondly, that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by his Holy Spirit in me: and thus begin in this life the eternal sabbath. (g) The Heidelberg emphasizes a *spiritual resting* and worship. This tendency to "spiritualize" or allegorize the law is as old as Origen (3<sup>rd</sup> Century). They see the work, we are to cease from, as "evil works" as in the Heidelberg Confession.

D.A. Carson (in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*) does *not* see New Testament evidence that the New Testament writers perceived Sunday as the Christian *Sabbath* contra Edwards and Puritans.

By the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D. Sunday was clearly the designated day of worship for Christians AND there is no record of controversy on this subject.

But it is noteworthy that no New Testament or early church writer makes the claim that Sunday is the command of the Lord for Christians.

The resurrection appearances may have been connected to Sunday worship early but the resurrection and appearances are not presented by New Testament writers as a reason for Sunday worship.

"The Sabbath law is clearly motivated by religious and social concerns. First of all, the Sabbath was introduced to remind the people of Israel of a divine timetable. This timetable, the seven-day week is to be followed on earth. This is followed by a social concern; workers need a period of regular rest, which is provided of everybody—animals, servants, and aliens. But the Sabbath is more than an

imitation of a divine pattern or an expression of social concern; it is a sign, a perpetual covenant between God and his people. This sign tells of God's grace (sanctifying his people), God's holiness (for the people and Yahweh), and God's authority (a covenant that must be obeyed)." (Dressler in Carson, 26)

"Sunday worship appears, when the evidence becomes available, in the second century, as the universal practice outside Palestine (as begun in Palestine before the Gentile mission began under Paul). There is no trace whatever of any controversy as to whether Christians should worship on Sunday, and on record of any Christian group that did not worship on Sunday." (Bauckham in Carson, 236)

Jewish Christians probably continued honoring Saturday Sabbath but added Sunday worship. There is no evidence that Jewish Christians left synagogue worship until they were excluded because of the Christianity.

Jewish Christians rightly saw themselves as the renewed Israel (Abraham's true children) and as such would have found it perfectly right to continue to observe Sabbath (even Saturday worship which was the custom of the Jews).

While Sunday was still a workday in the cultures of Palestine and Rome, the earliest records of Christian Sunday worship place it early in the morning and late at night on Sunday. (Bauckham in Carson, 239)

"Whether this choice of Sunday, was originally a matter of mere convenience or whether it was initially chosen as the day of the Resurrection, there can be no doubt that it was soon associated with the Resurrection, and only this can really account for the fact that worship on Sunday acquired

normative status throughout the Christian world.” (Bauckham in Carson, 240)

“Our study of the origins of the “Lord’s Day” has given no hint of properly sabbatical associations; for the earliest Christians it was not a substitute for the Sabbath or a day of rest nor related in any way to the fourth commandment. It was simply, by the normative custom of the apostolic church, the day on which Christians met to worship, and, for us, the use of its title, “The Lord’s Day”, in Revelation 1:10 gives that custom the stamp of canonical authority.” (Bauckham in Carson, 240)

I am aware that it wasn’t until the 13<sup>th</sup> century that theologians began to connect Sunday worship with the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment. (Bauckham in Carson 306) Part of the reason for that late date is that in the intervening years the prominent Christian theologians had spiritualized the commandment to the extent that they considered every day as a Sabbath to the Lord. (Bauckham in Carson, 300)

Not until Eusebius (A.D. 330 sermon) do we have the first evidence of an equation of Sunday worship with Sabbath rest but he proves too much when he equates the Jewish Sabbath with all days of the week for the Christian. (Bauckham in Carson 284)

Saint Augustine(A.D. 300s) likewise taught a spiritualized Sabbath (an eschatological “rest”)—seven-day-a-week Sabbath. Likewise the Lord’s Day is every day.

John Chrysostom (A.D. 400s) preached that Sunday worship honored the one-in-seven principle laid down by God and that on that day we should cease from work (Sabbath) to give ourselves to spiritual things. (Bauckham in Carson 287)

Not until the 500s did the Sunday-Sabbath as cessation from work become common. This Medieval Sabbatarianism grew from practical ground not theological.  
(Bauckham in Carson 303)

Thomas Aquinas in 1200s makes popular the moral versus ceremonial distinctions in the law and thus sees a moral law (Natural law) in the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment that requires man to set aside regular time for worship (one-in-seven was the established definition of regular). That moral law was kept by Jews in the ceremonial 7<sup>th</sup> day worship and Christians keep it by 1<sup>st</sup> day worship.  
(Bauckham in Carson 306)

It was this Thomist view promulgated by Roman Catholic teaching that made Sunday Sabbath (rest and worship) the norm in Christianity.

Bauckham claims that the Protestant Reformation broke with the Catholic Sabbatarianism and returned to a more apostolic view AND that it was later reformers (Puritans in particular) that restored a very strict Sabbatarianism.

### **Calvin and Luther:**

The Decalogue remained, as with Augustine, the essence of Christian morality. The distinction of moral and ceremonial law remained. No attempt was made to establish Sunday worship on New Testament grounds. The principle of a day of rest for worship (established in middle ages) was not repudiated.

## Appendix C

### **Why Does God Always Demand Praise? C.S. Lewis (edited)**

When I first began to draw near to belief in God...I found a stumbling block in the demand so clamorously made by all religious people that we should "praise" God; still more in the suggestion that God Himself demanded it. We all despise the man who demands continued assurance of his own virtue, intelligence or delightfulness; we despise still more the crowd of people round every dictator, every millionaire, every celebrity, who gratify that demand. Thus a picture, at once ludicrous and horrible, both of God and of His worshippers, threatened to appear in my mind. The Psalms were especially troublesome in this way... More than once the Psalmists seemed to be saying, "God, you like praise. Do this for me, and you shall have some." ... Again and again the speaker asks to be saved from death on the ground that if God lets him die God will get no more praise from them, for the ghosts in Sheol cannot praise. And mere quantity of praise seemed to count; "seven times a day do I praise thee." It was extremely distressing. It made one think what one least wanted to think. Gratitude to God, reverence to Him, obedience to Him, I thought I could understand; not this perpetual talk of God's "right" to be praised.

I still think "right" is a bad way of expressing it, but I believe I now see what that author meant. It is perhaps easiest to begin with inanimate objects, which can have no rights. What do we mean when we say that a picture is "admirable? We certainly don't mean it "deserves" admiration in the sense in which a student "deserves" a high mark from a teacher- i.e. that a human being will have suffered injustice if it is not awarded. The sense in which

the picture "deserves" or "demands" admiration is rather this; admiration is the correct, adequate or appropriate, response to it, that, if paid, admiration will not be "thrown away", and that if we do not admire we shall be stupid, insensible, and great losers, we shall have missed something. In that way many objects both in Nature and in Art may be said to deserve, or merit, or demand, admiration. It was from this end that I found it best to approach the idea that God "demands" praise. To worship God is simply to be awake, to have entered the real world; not to appreciate Him is to have lost the greatest experience, and in the end to have lost all. The incomplete and crippled lives of those who are tone deaf, have never been in love, never known true friendship, never cared for a good book, never enjoyed the feel of the morning air on their cheeks, never enjoyed football, are faint images of it. But of course this is not all. God does not only "demand" praise as the supremely beautiful and all-satisfying Object. He does apparently command it as lawgiver. The Jews were told to sacrifice. We are under an obligation to go to church. But this was a difficulty only because I did not understand that it is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence to men. It is not of course the only way. But for many people at many times the "fair beauty of the Lord" is revealed chiefly or only while they worship Him together. Even in Judaism the essence of the sacrifice was not really that men gave bulls and goats to God, but that by their so doing God gave Himself to men; in the central act of our own worship of course this is far clearer- there it is who receive. The miserable idea that God should in any sense need, or crave for, our worship like a vain woman wanting compliments, or a vain author presenting his new books to people who never met or heard of him, is implicitly answered by the words "If I were hungry I would not tell you". Even if such an absurd Deity could be conceived, He would hardly come

to us, the lowest of rational creatures, to gratify His appetite. I don't want my dog to bark approval of my books.

But the most obvious fact about praise-whether of God or anything- strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honour. I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise... The world rings with praise—lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favourite game - praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars. I had not noticed how the humblest, and at the same time most balanced and capacious, minds, praised most, while the cranks, misfits and malcontents praised least. The good critics found something to praise in many imperfect works; the bad ones continually narrowed the list of books we might be allowed to read. The healthy and unaffected man, even if luxuriously brought up and widely experienced in good cookery, could praise a very modest meal: the dyspeptic and the snob found fault with all. Except where intolerably adverse circumstances interfere, praise almost seems to be inner health made audible. Not does it cease to be so when, through lack of skill, the forms of its expression are very uncouth or even ridiculous. Heaven knows, many poems of praise addressed to an earthy beloved are as bad as our bad hymns, and an anthology of love poems for public and perpetual use would probably be as sore a trial to literary taste as Hymns Ancient and Modern. I had not noticed either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: "Isn't she lovely? Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that magnificent?" The Psalmists in telling everyone to praise

God are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about. My whole, more general, difficulty about the praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us, as regards the supremely Valuable, what we delight to do, what indeed we cant help doing, about everything else we value.

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed. It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not to be able to tell anyone how good he is; to come suddenly, at the turn of the road, upon some mountain valley of unexpected grandeur and then to have to keep silent because the people with you care for it no more than for a tin can in the ditch; to hear a good joke and find no one to share it with. This is so even when our expressions are inadequate, as of course they usually are...The worthier the object, the more intense this delight would be. If it were possible for a created soul fully (I mean, up to the full measure conceivable in a finite being) to "appreciate", that is to love and delight in, the worthiest object of all, and simultaneously at every moment to give this delight perfect expression, then that soul would be in supreme bliss.

It is along these lines that I find it easiest to understand the Christian doctrine that "Heaven" is a state in which angels now, and men hereafter, are perpetually employed in praising God. This does not mean, as it can so dismally suggest, that it is like "being in Church". For our "services" both in their conduct and in our power to participate, are merely attempts at worship. Never fully successful.... We are not riders but pupils in the riding school; for most of us the falls and bruises, the aching muscles and the severity of



the exercise, far outweigh those few moments in which we were, to our own astonishment, actually galloping without terror and without disaster. To see what the doctrine really means, we must suppose ourselves to be in perfect love with God- drunk with, drowned in, dissolved by, that delight which, far from remaining pent up within ourselves as incommunicable, hence hardly tolerable, bliss, flows out from us incessantly again in effortless and perfect expression, our joy no more separable from the praise in which it liberates and utters itself that the brightness a mirror receives is separable from the brightness it sheds. The Scotch catechism says that man's chief end is "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever". But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.

Meanwhile of course we are merely, as Donne says, tuning our instruments. The tuning up of the orchestra can be itself delightful, but only to those who can in some measure, however little, anticipate the symphony. The Jewish sacrifices, and even our own most sacred rites, as they actually occur in human experience, are, like the tuning - promise, not performance. Hence, like the tuning, they may have in them much duty and little delight; or none. But the duty exists for the delight. When we carry out our "religious duties" we are like people digging channels in a waterless land, in order that when at last the water comes, it may find them ready.

From chapter ix of Reflections on the Psalms by C.S. Lewis





