

Officer Training Worship and the Church Lesson 8

Introduction:

A placard during the Jesus movement of the late 60's and 70's ...

“Jesus – Yes! The Church – No!”

Popular image of the church ... old, decaying buildings, sparse, aged congregations, irrelevant, anachronistic clergy ...

When the Confession speaks of “*Catholic*” Church, it is referring to:

_____ church – of all places – not the _____

The most important statement of WCF chapter on the church is the concept of the _____ Church ...

Doug Kelly in his commentary on the WCF says:

“Essential to Roman Catholicism is the visibility of the church, with the pope as visible head. Essential to Protestantism is the invisible church, with its invisible head, Christ.”

If the be all and end all of the church is its VISIBILITY it must have a visible head ... thus the POPE.

WCF XXV.2 regarding the visible church ends with an interesting statement: “*out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.*”

This statement more properly belongs to the invisible church, yet speaks of the centrality of the visible church in salvation.

DOUG KELLY WRITES:

“Although He pleases *ordinarily* to work through the visible church when He brings anyone into salvation, i.e. into the invisible church, He does not always or necessarily do so.” (R. Catholics say – *absolutely* necessary)

NT knows nothing of a personal faith that is not associated with the church - “Lord adding to their number” Acts 2:41

- _____:
- _____ The Gospel is tied to the church (Eph.3:4-11)
 - Christ gave Himself for the Church (Eph.5:25)
 - “I will build My Church” - Mt.16:18 - giving keys of kingdom to leaders (v.19)
 - What we tend to interpret individually was intended to be taken corporately
 - Instructions in epistles addressed to the churches.
 - “You” ... not singular, but plural.

I. Metaphors of the Church

Bride / Body / Bldg / Kingdom / Army / Royal Priesthood / Holy Nation /
Flock / Chosen People / Family / Harlot ...

Romans, Ephesians, Corinthians, Colossians

1. The _____ of Christ Ephesians 1:22, 23

Ephesians 1:22, 23 “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be **HEAD** over everything for the church, which is his **BODY**, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

A. Christ is Head, which means he is _____. Colossians 1:18

Colossians 1:18-20 “And he is the **HEAD** of the *body*, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, **so that in everything he might have the supremacy**. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

1. He is Lord of all things by _____. Colossians 1:15-17

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

2. He is Lord of all things by _____. Colossians 1:20

In what ways would the fact that Christ (and no one else) is HEAD of the church show itself practically (and obviously) in the life of the church?

B. The Church is the Body, which means we are _____.

1. We are to _____ our lives.

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 5:15

2. We are to _____ our bodies.

Romans 12:1, 2; Luke 14:25-27

APPLICATION QUESTION:

“Does my life now demonstrate that Jesus is truly my Lord? Am I (and is my family) willing to count the cost and re-order priorities for the sake of Christ and His Kingdom?” Matthew 6:33; Luke 18:28-30

C. The Central Idea of the “Body” metaphor = _____

Conveys the idea of vital connection between Christ and members and between members and one another ...

Not a voluntary association of persons united by common interests for conviviality or cooperation ...

In a sense the church is _____ ...
Therefore Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:12 calls the church, “the Christ” ...

Not in the sense of absolute equivalence, but of a union so deep that the church is to BE Christ ... “visibilized” upon the earth until he comes.

Ephesians 3:21 “to him (the one who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine – v.20) be **GLORY in the church** and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

“Glory” = visible manifestation of the invisible nature of God.

2. The _____ of Christ. Acts 20:8

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the **flock** of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”

A. Christ is the _____.

John 10:1-5,11-15 11 “**I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD. THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP.** 14 “**I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD; I KNOW MY SHEEP AND MY SHEEP KNOW ME—** 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

B. The _____ are under-shepherds.

Exodus 18:13-23 (note especially verses 19-20)

1. A healthy church is committed to making the primary role of the Teaching elder that of (1.) **Pastor-teacher** and (2.) **Leader-equipper**.

The importance of a clear _____ of the role, expectations of the Senior Pastor and other teaching elders.

- a. The Pastor must be a man of _____. v. 19b “You must be the people’s representative before God and bring their disputes to him.”
 - b. The Pastor must be a _____. v. 20a “Teach them the decrees and laws ... “
 - c. The Pastor must be an _____.
v. 20b “ ... show them the way to live ... “
 - d. The Pastor must be an _____.
v. 20c “ ... show ... the duties they are to perform.”
2. A healthy church is committed to making the primary roles of the Ruling Elder that of (1.) **shepherding** and (2.) **equipping**. (1 Peter 5:2, 3)
- a. Elders must be _____ to the flock.
“Be shepherds of God’s flock ... under your care ... “ (2a)
 - b. Elders must be _____ of ministries.
“ ... serving as overseers ... “ (2b)
 - c. Elders must be _____ to the flock.
“ ... being examples to the flock.” (3)

ASK YOURSELF:

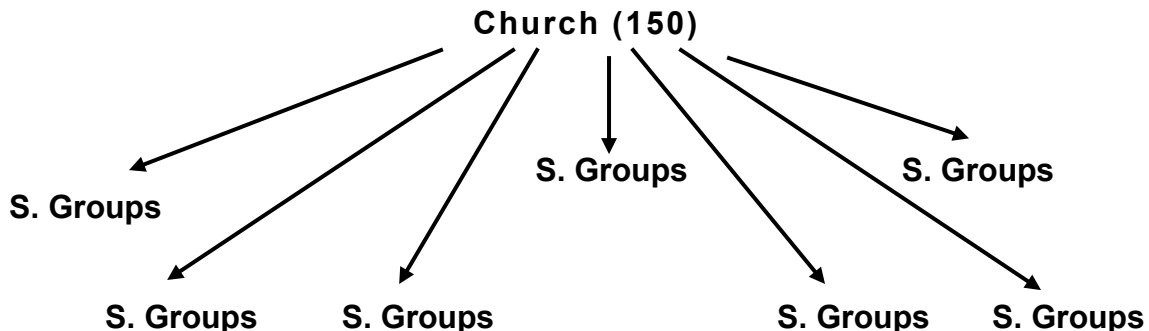
“Am I willing to let God transform me into a shepherd-leader?”

C. The Members of the church are the _____. John 10:20-28

1. _____ for the sheep. **Ezekiel 34:1-5,15-22**
2. _____ the sheep.

ORGANIZED ACCORDING TO PENS ...

Exodus 18:21 “But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.”



ASK YOURSELF:

“Am I willing to spend the time and energy to care for the sheep, bind up their wounds, bring back the strays and search for the lost?”

3. The _____ of God

Exodus 6:6ff. “I will take you as my people, and I will be your God.”

1 Peter 2:9-10 “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Revelation 21:3 “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.”

Galatians 6:16 “Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.”

One of the problems today is loneliness & alienation leading to depression & despair. The fundamental cause = no sense of _____.

The breakdown of the extended family in the industrial revolution and the nuclear family in the technological revolution has resulted in a
GREATLY inhibited experience of community.

David Watson: “In an age of isolation, the joy of really belonging to God and of being a part of his people throughout the world – belonging which depends not on earning acceptance, but on receiving freely of God’s love is one of the most relevant features of the Christian message of good news ... There is something not readily understood in educated western culture, where the emphasis is extravagantly on the individual ... one of the reasons for the chronic and cosmic loneliness that plagues our society today. The root of all sin could be called independence; and it is for this reason that God calls us not only into a personal relationship with Himself, but at the same time into a corporate relationship with the rest of the people of God.”¹

II. The Marks of the Church

The Marks of the Church

1. Sound preaching of the _____ - Gospel taught & embraced
2. Right administration of the _____ - “visible Word”
3. _____ - essential for maintaining health (immune system)

A church’s faithfulness to the “Marks of the Church” ought to be the primary determining factor when looking for a church home & not its size or programs.

¹ David Watson, *I Believe in the Church*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978, pp. 76, 82.

III. The _____ of the Church

What are some of the criteria that Evangelicals use to measure the health and success of a local church?

<i>Attendance</i>	<i>Size of Building</i>
<i>Budget</i>	<i>Size of Staff</i>
<i>Number on roll</i>	<i>Program Opportunities</i>
<i>Missions Budget</i>	<i>Number of Elders</i>

See "The Church of Irristible Influence", p. 106-107, Addendum
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1. God measures the _____ of a church by looking at 3 qualities
Ephesians 1:15-18 "For this reason, ever since I heard about **your faith in the Lord Jesus** and **your love for all the saints**, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers ... I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that **you may know the hope** to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints ... "

Colossians 1:4-5 "We have heard of **your faith in Christ Jesus** and of **the love you have for all the saints** - - the faith and love that spring from **the hope that is stored up for you in heaven** and that you have already heard about in the word of truth ... "

1 Thessalonians 1:3 "We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by **faith**, your labor prompted by **love**, and your endurance inspired by **hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Thessalonians 1:3 "We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because **your faith is growing more and more**, and **the love every one of you has for each other is increasing**."

1 Corinthians 13:13 "And now these three remain: **faith, hope and love**. But the greatest of these is **love**."

*The vital signs of a healthy church. Is the signal strong in this church ...
Is it strong in your life?*

Discuss with your mentor.

A. Are the Saints at TOPC Growing in [_____]?

Evidence = an enjoyment of the Gospel that leads to ...

B. Are the Saints at TOPC Growing in [_____]?

One pastor and church consultant wrote an article in the Fall, 1999 issue of *Leadership* about "motivation". He pointed out that the old appeals aren't working anymore. "In the post-war culture of the 1950's when social conformity delivered people to the church, leaders could motivate based on challenge, reasonability, and commitment. In our churches today, these motivators are still the

most frequently employed, but they no longer work. The leaders are broadcasting on the frequency of challenge and commitment, but the people are listening on the frequency of compassion and community. He says, "We have had in recent years a focus on program-driven churches, purpose-driven churches, and vision-driven churches. They talk the language of commitment. But when you look behind the scenes, you see these churches work because somebody is delivering the compassion and community. Increasingly, unchurched people will be drawn to churches that care. High-compassion, high-community congregations will thrive in the coming years."²

Daniel Brown in *The Other Side of Pastoral Ministry* shares that his churches' purpose statement or mission statement is simply "to help people know God better". **BUT HOW???**

From John 17 we discover:

People know God better "in community" because God is a Trinity (a community), & we are in His image. This means that people initially discover God and grow in their knowledge of God best "in community".

Knowing God better involves things like worship, prayer, edification, equipping, service, etc. Knowing God also results in others coming to know God through us, thus outreach and missions. When you really know God you walk around like a living "God-capsule". He is in you and shines through you. People can't be around you without bumping into God.

When that happens two basic outcomes will result: some will recoil away from the God who is in you, and some will be attracted to God in you; and they will become "God-knowers" themselves.

What this means is that the main criterion for evaluating everything in our personal lives and in the church is this: _____

_____. All other qualitative and quantitative measures of TOPC's progress and effectiveness must be in light of this. For example, our numerical growth, or lack thereof, is important only against the backdrop of this criterion.

Our motto at Chapelgate (near Baltimore) was, "a caring people reaching the world for Christ". This was simply a way to express that we believed the main evidence that we know God better and the main way others are attracted to know Him is **LOVE**. Thus, our motto sought to **meld the great commandment and the great commission**. [see Addendum on Definition of Caring and Reaching]

C. Are the Saints at TOPC Growing in [_____]?

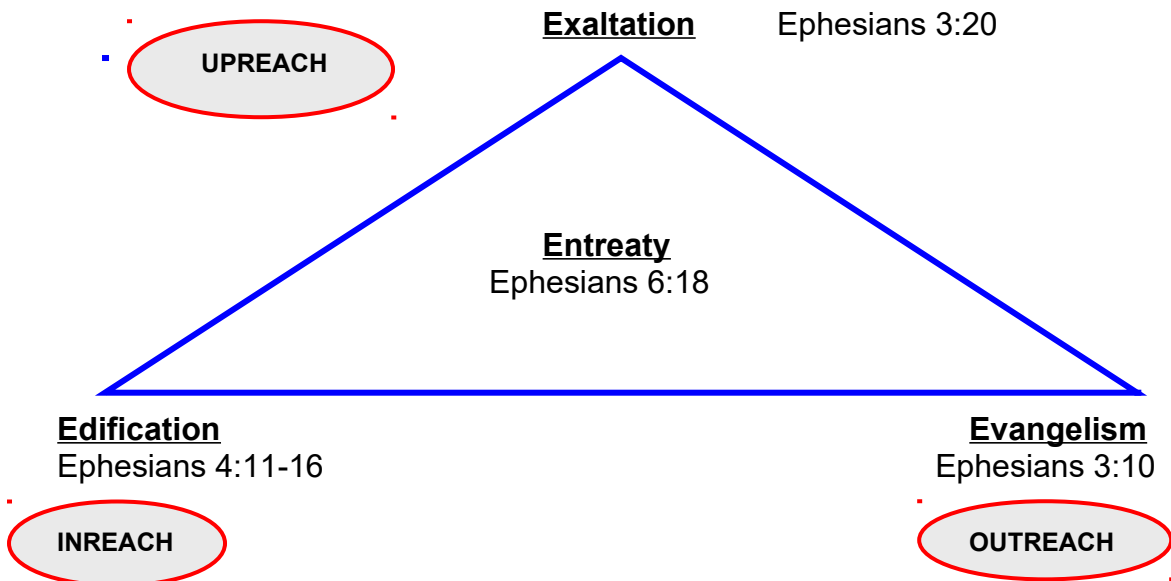
² Callahan, Kenneth L., "The New Reality in Motivation", *Leadership*, Fall, 1999, p.31-32.

Definition: **Hope** is [] of and [] for the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13) (2 Tim. 4:8) ... when as Ephesians 1 says we will fully know what we begin to know now “ ... **the hope** to which he has called you, **the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.**”

Again in Hebrews ... HOPE is the antidote to spiritual defection ... it is a kind of enjoying now what we will have in fullness in the Eschaton (the consummation of all things in the New Heavens and the New Earth).

Ask yourself: **Am I functioning in my church in a way that encourages others to grow in faith, love and hope?**

2. God Measures the _____ of a local church by looking at 4 areas of ministry life focus



Addendum:

Definition of Caring and Reaching

We have cared well when people matter to us deeply. Caring happens when genuine faith engendered love is in our hearts, reflecting itself in the fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5:22-26 and moving us to take the time to listen well, ask good questions, and as best we are able, know who people really are in their hearts. This will mean that people are more important to us than programs, statistical outcomes and the achievement of ministry goals. In other words, love for people will drive, inform and interpret all programs, outcomes and goals. Out of an understanding of individual hearts, and out of genuinely valuing people in this way, we pray with them and for them, we share those portions of God's truth we believe are most needed by them, we share with them the lessons and mystery of our own spiritual pilgrimage and struggle, and we meet needs as best we understand them physically, emotionally and spiritually. The appropriate response to need includes an integrated and

coordinated application of ministries of mercy, mentoring, friendship and spiritual direction.³

We have reached out well when we have shared the Gospel in both **life** and **lip** with those we are called to embrace here and abroad. The **life** part is mainly the kinds of qualities and actions emphasized in the definition of caring above.^{4 & 5}

Addendum (from *The Church of Irresistible Influence*):

“Though we stand in awe of what ultimately was accomplished (by the apostles), the truth is that the apostles never proceeded with a view to “success.” Not, at least, in the choice of action verbs we choose to define success: *conquer; overcome, win*. Nowhere in Scripture do you find success like his as the objective or the promise. And yet these believers gave themselves relentlessly to the ancient world, which they too knew was passing away (1 John 2:17). They “invaded” it, loved it, served it, and enriched it with their good works.

Why? Two reasons.

First, *they saw themselves entrusted by God with a special calling, a sacred duty to service*. Impact, as we think of it, was not their goal; faithful stewardship was. As the apostle Paul testified in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, “So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”

Second, *they measured success by how much they loved, not by how much the culture changed*. These early Christians no doubt felt “successful,” but it was not because they measured it in terms of winning and losing, by numbering evangelical notches on their toga belts. No, to them, the objective

³ A guiding passage of Scripture for all of this is 1 John 3:16-20.

⁴ Were there people who came to Christ through the preaching of the Apostles who never really knew the Apostles and whom the Apostles never really knew in depth? Yes. But the Apostles and the people were never really satisfied with that. They were always in the process of trying to know those to whom they ministered as well as they could. But we cannot always attain all the features of our ideal. And we must recognize that God can do some rather amazing things even when we do not do ministry as perfectly as we would like. It should also be true however that we are never satisfied with our sin, imperfections, and defects.

⁵ Scott Simmons (former staff member of mine) summarized this point in this way: “It is impossible to completely separate reaching and caring, since reaching out must be done in a caring manner, and caring never happens without reaching outside of ourselves. The two words are not synonymous, however. And there are many occasions in Scripture where the gospel is proclaimed to large groups in which the preacher knew nobody in the audience (Acts 17). Paul, however, was still caring when he preached, and he sought to know those who came to him with interest in his message. Paul’s philosophy was to give not only the gospel message, but his life in ministry to the church (1 Thessalonians 2:8). So, caring leads to reaching out, but reaching out in proclamation leads to caring.”

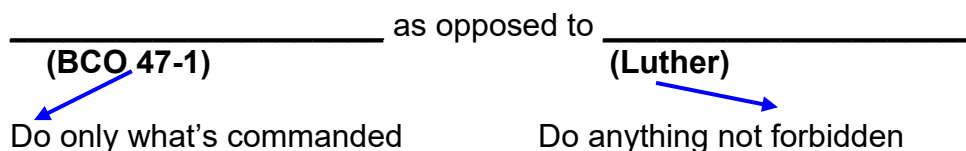
in their love and service was bringing glory to God. Whether they were employing their gifts or giving up their lies, success was simply “glorifying the Lord.” Peter makes this exact point when he says:

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

So, when we say, “What difference can I make? We frankly pose the wrong question. We should ask, “What stewardship has God called me to render?” Period. This is all that will matter in eternity.

And when we say, ‘It won’t do any good!’ we need to be reminded what ‘good’ is. If God has been glorified, we have done good. Real good.”⁶

III. The Worship of the Church



The Worship of God = most important thing we do / or ever will do.

The main reason God made man ... [every creature has a purpose]
He custom designed us to be “world-class worshippers” ...

Anything that not realized / perverts its main purpose brings a most
terrible / tragic meaninglessness into its existence ...
the higher the purpose the more appalling the tragedy!!

Therefore this purpose / calling must be most diligently protected from
attacks of Satan & inventions / aberrations of our own hearts ...

Importance of this issue strikingly demonstrated ...
1st, 2nd and 4th commandments about worship =
2nd / 4th only ones with elaboration ... **see also Ex. 20:22-25**

Calvin (1543, Diet of Spires, Works, 1:126) “The integrity of the Christian faith in any society is maintained by sound adherence to two things and everything else is subsumed under these two categories of knowledge: “The manner in which God is duly worshipped and the source from which salvation is to be obtained.”

⁶ Robert Lewis, The Church of Irresistible Influence, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001, pp. 106-107

Notice Calvin put worship ahead of salvation ... Reformed scholars saw salvation primarily in terms of _____ ...

Whereas Lutherans saw salvation as primarily _____
_____ (two sides of same thing) ...

The Continental Reformers ... called **Protestants** ...

The main thing they were protesting =

Worship of God in any way not prescribed by Him ...


They saw departure from Biblically prescribed means of worship as
the same thing as departure from the Biblical God!

The Meaning of the Second Commandment

1st commandment of 10 Commandments ... **Who** we are to worship?

2nd commandment “ “ “ ... **How** we are to worship?

It's not only possible to worship false gods ...
We can worship the true God falsely!



Augustine: “Idolatry is worshipping anything that ought to be used, or using anything that is meant to be worshiped. “

The following is not intended to be an exhaustive statement of our philosophy of worship. It is however expressive of our views and values concerning some issues that are in the American church today and some matters that have arisen in our church. A more thorough work would have to include a number of basic and foundational things not addressed here, such as, what is worship in general and corporate worship in particular? Therefore this is a living document designed mainly to help us wrestle with the questions before us and provide a framework for ongoing discussion.

Corporate Worship Core Values

Our core values are summarized in 4 basis categories: Biblical Consistency, Stylistic Simplicity, Authentic Piety and Participatory Prominence

A sentence or two on each of these phrases may be helpful. Biblical Consistency: We will unashamedly, but hopefully without arrogance or uncritical partisanship, seek to express our Reformation heritage in our choice of elements in worship and how we use them. We are a people with a legacy ... we have roots, and our worship should demonstrate those roots. For example we have a directory for worship that does not have constitutional force but it is also stronger than mere pious advice. This is why we are especially careful to have the key Biblical elements of corporate worship present in every service except on extremely rare occasions for compelling reasons. Stylistic Simplicity: We will strive for excellence and a measure of

“bashful creativity” that does not attract attention to itself, but to God. This means that we will deliberately work against the modern tendency toward “spectatorism” (the feeling that one is watching a production). Someone has rightly pointed out that when the congregation becomes an audience, worship tends to become vaudeville. The elements of worship themselves and the rubrics that connect them will be simple, unadorned and unostentatious. We are more interested in living out the nature of true worship than we are at being novel. Authentic Piety: We will provide for the possibility of a full range of appropriate devotional passions from lament through reverential awe and wonder to loud praise. The Psalms, the best single Biblical guide for the proper gamut of emotions in worship, seems to cover this broad spectrum. Participatory Prominence: Though there are times when it is legitimate for the congregation in corporate worship to be engaged in listening to someone else pray, profess, confess, petition, sing or play an instrument, the genius of the Reformation’s recovery of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers puts the accent or emphasis upon the whole congregation making active, united, vocal contributions to the worship service. Worship is an action verb, and therefore the role of each individual congregant should be as participatory as possible within the framework of a logically arranged and thematically connected service that utilizes all the Biblical elements of corporate worship as frequently as is practical.⁷

Implications growing out of the above:

- We will ask the following question and make changes in light of our answers: What can we do to maximally diminish any “performance” image to what we do in worship and how we lead worship? We know that our culture is addicted to entertainment and that bad cultural features have begun to express themselves in the Church as a result. We will avoid anything that is ostentatious, flamboyant, or that draws attention to itself. All worship leaders will embrace the goal of “becoming invisible” after John the Baptist’s example, “He must increase and I must decrease”. Therefore, the leader’s approach is to say just enough in worship to connect the various elements smoothly with one another. The idea is for the personality of the leader to be quiescent and the personality of Christ to be predominant. This is not an easy thing to achieve and is a lot like “be ye perfect” – we never get there, but we are always striving for that result. All leaders will avoid anything that could send the signal of a “show” to be watched or a presentation to be observed. Some may rightly wonder how all of this relates to the fact that preaching involves some elements of drama, persuasion, energy and intensity that could be interpreted as manipulative, personality driven and attention grabbing. Good questions, and the only thing that offsets this valid concern is that God himself established this element of worship and even gives it the amusing designation ... “the foolishness of preaching” (1 Corinthians 1:21)

⁷ The Greek word *leitourgia* (from which our word *liturgy* is derived) is frequently used in the N. T. (and the Greek O. T. – Septuagint) for corporate worship. It literally means, “the work of the people.”

but he seems to take a dim view of other human inventions designed to impress or attract attention to the worshipper's piety, zeal, artistry or spirituality. The main point is for preacher's to make sure their messages are Biblical in content and that whatever drama in presentation and delivery is reflective of genuine convictions held and genuine spiritual passion enjoyed.⁸

- We will have a bias for using 'specialists' (choirs, ensembles, musicians, soloists, pastoral leadership, etc.) in ways that coaxes a specific congregational response (active participation). For example there will still be special pieces sung by, or read or prayed by, these groups. However, we will especially look for pieces that pull the congregation into a portion of the song, sequence of songs, or prayers or readings. Again, we will always be asking ourselves, "How can we erode the tendency of our people to become spectators?"
- Heritage is important. Though we will be open to considering insight from a number of different expressions of orthodox Christianity, we will have a bias toward ways of doing things in worship that connect with the doctrinal and historical distinctives of the Presbyterian and Reformed faith. We will always strive to do this with freshness and passion. We will be respectful of tradition without falling into the trap of traditionalism. We don't live in the past, but we do live out of the past. We will avoid the generational pride and myopia of ignoring the past and "reinventing the wheel" on every question of doctrine and practice.
- Musical text and styles are not matters merely of subjective taste and personal preference concerning which there are no guiding principles and boundaries. Text should be decided first of all by whether it is theologically sound and clear and secondly by whether it is artistically rich and gripping. Not everyone is equally gifted or trained to make these distinctions. Text and style should be selected to express the appropriate balance between Transcendence and Immanence with a strong bias for music that is decidedly vertical (Godward in orientation). We will studiously avoid that which is textually or musically trite or where the

⁸ Op Cit., Mike Ross: "In revival, worship actually REPLACES entertainment, sports, T.V., recreation and travel." "... preaching can't be too long, too many hymns can't be sung, prayers can't be too protracted, the pews can't be too hard, the air too hot, the timing too inconvenient. The people are hungry for God and God is present." "... whenever the church declines, worship becomes cluttered with extraneous and extra-biblical things ... drama, clowns, dance (he doesn't take time to defend the unbiblical character of these, and this one [dance] in particular), vestments, an emphasis on professional music and musicians (in a way that feels like a show), and miscellaneous man-centered ideas. When revival comes worship is streamlined ... preaching, prayer, singing, sacraments. The trappings of man give way to the ordinances of God." We might not agree with all aspects of these remarks, but the emphasis on worship being uncluttered and without an entertainment motif is certainly valuable.

music fights the lyrics.⁹

- We will strive to make the “horizontal” (manward) components of our worship marked by honesty, vulnerability, reality and integrity. For example we will selectively and periodically bring testimonies into our worship, which are not always glowing ‘victory’ stories. Stories will be told that convey the reality of ongoing struggle in the pilgrimage of faith, but offer the hope of God’s constant presence and sufficiency in the struggle.
- Cross-generational involvement is a high value. We will look for ways to appropriately use children, youth and young adults in participation and leadership to reinforce our commitment to all ages in our worship.
- We will strive for a rich tapestry of emotional tone and tempo in our worship from lament and abject silence to loud praise and celebration. We will avoid an unhealthy predominance of any one subjective motif.
- Since the congregation is the primary choir the role of all other musicians is to support and encourage the participation of the congregation. The musicians (choirs, ensembles, orchestra, organist) lead the singing so that it is on time and on key. They provide vocal strength and augmentation that entices congregational involvement. They become a kind of “mini-congregation” of prepared singers whose vocal clarity, enthusiasm (or sobriety as appropriate) and readiness draws the congregation into vibrant participation. They instruct in new songs or provide leadership in the singing of old songs in new ways. They provide leadership to smoothly segue between pieces. Most importantly they are a group of heart prepared people leading vocally who are worshipping God with prepared intensity and focus through the words and music. Their visible presence in that capacity has a powerful (often more felt than consciously observed) impact to elevate the spiritual acuity in the room. One of the implications of this perspective is that, though technical preparation and skill is important, heart preparation is more important. The skill level needs to be high enough to minimize musical “bloopers” that distract. But, we must train the congregation to view them as proctors rather than performers. We must help the music teams to grow in their own worship. It will then “spill over” into the congregation.

Faithful adherence to these convictions may actually put us more and more out of accord with “pop Christian culture” (a bit of an oxymoron since there is very little real culture producing work by Christians in our world today). Worship in many contexts more resembles a circus than it does the kind of reverential awe and humble joy that should mark our approach to the Holy One of Israel. But, I do believe that there is a faithful remnant out there and

⁹ For much more detail on this point refer to chapter 8, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down*, Marva Dawn, Eerdmans, 1995.

maybe even a growing backlash against the theatrics of entertainment addicted, popular Christian “worship”. We may see the growth of a group more and more disenfranchised from and disgusted with superficiality and hype who long for simple, unadorned worship that links us to some faithful legacy, is genuine, uncontrived and where personalities recede into the background as “the manifest presence” fills the sanctuary of God’s people.

The following excursus based on the last sentence or two above:

Robert Webber in his book, *The Younger Evangelicals*, sites trends that would hearten us concerning the emerging generation’s appetite for worship that reflects these core values.¹⁰

He asserts three trends in the worship of younger evangelicals ... “They are (1) a reaction to entertainment worship, (2) a longing for an experience of God’s presence, and (3) a restoration of liturgical elements of worship.” (p.188)

They seem to be much more attracted to worship that is quieter, meditative and reflective. Even their musical styles are somewhat indicative of that emphasis. There is a revival of old hymns with their rich content, either in a rediscovery of old literature that has become lost through disuse or reviving hymns in current use with new musical settings that often do not seem either traditional or contemporary. This musical revival has spurred a growing group of contemporary artists and poets to try their hand at writing new hymns, some of which is rivaling the richness of the old Puritan and first Great Awakening hymn writers. The consistent theme in this shift is a move toward that which is serious, content rich, invites contemplation and is not necessarily mimicking any particular musical genre. (See Addenda #1)

We observe these trends with enthusiasm not because we are trying to be “hip” or “up to date” as if we make decisions about worship or any other area of the life of the church based on the whims and ever changing fluctuations of the contemporary culture. Quite the opposite! We first anchor ourselves to sound Biblical values and then address the cultural context and discern ways to engage it without compromising those values. But, we are guardedly encouraged when we see that the superficialities of “post-everything-ism” seem to be exhausting themselves in their sheer inconsequentiality, especially within the emerging generation. Many of these trends are already quite visible in some parts of the country, but will not become as noticeable in the some places until the “contemporary worship” fad crests as it already has in other places. Also, even if Webber’s cultural analysis (other writers allege similar developments) is inaccurate in critical ways, we are committed to worship that embraces the core values listed above. It also needs to be said

¹⁰ Robert Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals, Facing the Challenges of the New World*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002, chapter 13, Worship Leaders, from Program to Narrative.

that even if Webber's analysis is correct we might not agree with all his applications of these things in that he tends to be more rigorously committed to classic liturgics than we would believe is warranted by a scrupulous interpretation of Biblical principles.

Practical Considerations:

1. Plan worship services that, *as much as possible*, match the sermon in theme and emphasis so that the worship is a seamless tapestry of elements that are like any personal conversation: each thought should link with the next in a logical progression.¹¹ In this way each element of worship should prepare for and spill into the next one. Each element should seem like the next logical thing to say or do.
2. Provide for as much congregational participation as possible. Worship should require something of the congregation. Passive engagement should be purposeful and mostly provide breathing space and preparative connectives for the congregation's next contribution.
3. Worship leadership should be brief, facilitate smooth transitions and not attract attention to itself.
4. Biblical liturgical logic will rightly be somewhat predictable [preparation for worship followed by a summons into God's presence followed by a burst of praise as we enter his manifest presence followed by invocations of his continued presence and blessing or prayers of adoration followed by expressions of our faith in him and fidelity toward him leading to acknowledgement of our sin before him and reception of pardoning grace from him on the merits of Christ's righteous life and atoning death inspiring prayers of intercession and thanksgiving followed by offerings after which God is heard through the Word preached and responded to in prayer and song which climaxes with the reception of his blessing and peace as we are dismissed to serve him and love one another and a lost world that desperately needs him], but the elements themselves should vary from week to week based on the theme and to forestall the tendency to "the metronome factor" (rote repetition that anesthetizes the spiritual senses).
5. Selection of songs is based on theological integrity, thematic appropriateness, artistic excellence, text and music that is cohesive and that is sensitive to the mood and emotional tempo or rhythm of that portion of worship. Strive for a balance of traditional and contemporary to facilitate a commitment to transcend all generational biases. Try not to burden the congregation with an excess of new material on any given Sunday, and provide familiarity and adjustment to the new material by using musical specialists, repetition and a blending of choral, ensemble and congregational participation.
6. Use ancient creedal and liturgical selections, but also plan new ones based on a mature blending of sound Biblical reflection and sacred poetry, especially hymns and songs.
7. Though one cannot find a specific scriptural prohibition of drama in corporate worship, and certainly there is a dramatic element (drama as an adjective rather than a noun) in all Biblical worship because of who is being addressed and how he is being addressed, there is also no Biblical precept or example for doing it as we normally conceive of it in the American context with actors or actresses,

¹¹ Sometimes the theme is better matched to something else such as communion, reception of new members, something seasonal or a special emphasis.

extra-Biblical scripts, etc. For this reason some would disallow it as a violation of the regulative principle (It is not commanded in Scripture). Rather than arguing the matter on that basis, it is clear that it puts the congregation in more of an audience posture rather than a contributing posture, can VERY easily convey a performance or show-like impression, is especially vulnerable to what can be called, "the cringe-factor" when not done well or the message is garbled by the medium, what is conveyed can almost always be more easily expressed in a more whole-congregation participatory element. For these reasons and others it is best avoided as an element in corporate worship.

Addenda

1 Popular Hymns:

"Hymnody needs to be popular. It is more closely related to folk song than to art song. It is because hymnody is, in its very essence, a kind of folk song that we must never close the door to new hymns written in the idiom of our day ... Time has a way of selecting the classics. We do not have to worry about that. What is important is that we give each generation its turn at expressing its devotion in the idiom of its day. Christian hymnody is like a great art museum. It has treasures from a great variety of ages and cultures, but it always seems to have room to show the best of contemporary works as well.

— Hughes Oliphant Old, from *LEADING IN PRAYER: A WORKBOOK FOR WORSHIP*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. p. 339. ISBN: 0802808212.

[Actually, the above title is what is printed on the cover of the book, but on the inside, the subtitle is *A WORKBOOK FOR MINISTERS*. Either way, this volume is a tutorial in public prayer for anyone who is responsible for leading God's people to the throne of grace. Highly recommended! Some of the various sections of the book are The Invocation, Psalms as Prayer, Prayers of Confession and Supplication, The Prayer of Illumination, Prayers of Intercession, Communion Prayers, Prayers of Thanksgiving, Hymnody, and Benedictions and Doxologies.]

#2 Humility in the matter of aesthetics and musical tastes (C. S. Lewis):

"There are two musical situations on which I think we can be confident that a blessing rests. One is where a priest or an organist, himself a man of trained and delicate taste, humbly and charitably sacrifices his own (aesthetically right) desires and gives the people humbler and coarser fare than he would wish, in a belief (even, as it may be, the erroneous belief) that he can thus bring them to God. The other is where the stupid and unmusical layman humbly and patiently, and above all silently, listens to music which he cannot, or cannot fully, appreciate, in the belief that it somehow glorifies God, and that if it does not edify him this must be his own defect." ("On Church Music" by C.S. Lewis, in *Christian Reflections* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967], p. 96)