



PHILOSOPHY OF WORSHIP

I. GOD-CENTERED WORSHIP

1. *God alone is deserving of Worship.* God, being the highest Being, deserves and demands our worship. He is a jealous God and as His people, we are called to give our highest affections to Him alone. (Ex. 20:3-6; Ps. 148:13)

"The ultimate aim is to experience God in such a way that he is glorified in our affections."

2. *Corporate Worship is a response to God.* Based on what we know to be true about God, we can worship Him. This knowledge comes mainly through the preaching and study of God's Word. Worship is an overflow from a redeemed creature to his Creator based on what has been revealed through scripture. (Ps. 8; 95:6-7; 147; Rom. 11:33-36)

"It is evident that man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God, and come down after such contemplation to look unto himself." John Calvin- Institutes of the Christian Religion, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 38

3. *The Gospel is what unites God's people in worship.* Regeneration is the ultimate enabler of a worshipper. The Gospel frees us to worship God and unites us with others who are regenerate. The Gospel also reminds us of our state before regeneration. As sinners we must remember that without Christ we are utterly lost. This should give us a mindset of humility and reverence as we come before God. (Ps. 86:12-13; 1 Pe. 2:9)

"We will try to avoid being trite, flippant, superficial, or frivolous, but instead will aim to set an example of reverence and passion and wonder and broken-hearted joy."

II. BIBLICAL TEXT

1. *Texts used in Worship must be in complete agreement with scripture.* The Bible is our authority for sanctification, therefore the texts used to worship the sanctifier must be in complete agreement with His ways, desires, and decrees. (Ps. 119:92-93; Eccl. 5:2; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2)

"The content of our singing and praying and welcoming and preaching and poetry should always conform to the truth of Scripture. But more than that, the content of God's Word should be woven through all we do in worship and will be the ground of all our appeal to authority."

2. *Texts used in Worship are to be both didactic and affectionate in content.* Teaching is a main emphasis during worship. The truths expressed in the text must be reflective both of scripture and our response to that scripture. In other words, the texts used in the worship setting should stimulate both our hearts and our minds, causing us to simultaneously muse on the truths of God and express with joy our praise to Him. (Ps. 19:7-11; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:15-17)

“The elements of our worship service should aim at kindling and carrying deep, strong, real emotions toward God, especially joy, but should not manipulate people’s emotions by failing to appeal to clear thinking about spiritual things based on shareable evidences outside ourselves (namely scripture).”

III. TRANSGENERATIONAL STYLE

1. *The style of Worship must be one that is inviting, not offensive.* Worship is a time to draw people near to God. Therefore, extremes of any style of music are inappropriate in a Worship setting. People from diverse backgrounds and age groups are brought together at church, and the style should be reflective of that diversity. (Rev. 15:4; Eph. 5:19-21; Col. 3:16-17)

“No church or service can be all things to all people. But we do not value stylistic narrowness. We believe there are affections owing to God that different tunes and different texts and different genres may awaken better than in others. We will strive to be who we are without exalting our own tastes as the standard of excellence or power.”

2. *The offering of Worship must be done in an excellent manner.* As different gifts from the congregation are utilized in the Worship service, a standard of excellence will be maintained. God is deserving of our best gifts. These offerings may not be perfect by the standards of men, but they must edify the body of Christ, come from a pure heart, and honor God. (1 Cor. 14:26-33, 40)

“We will try to sing and play and pray and teach in such a way that people’s attention will not be diverted from the substance by shoddy ministry nor by excessive finesse, elegance, or refinement. Natural, undistracting excellence will let the truth and beauty of God shine through. We will invest enough time and energy in order to be undistracting in transmitting heartfelt truth.”

3. *The attitude of Worship must be one that is preferential to one another.* Preferring one another must extend into the worship service. This demands not just an expectance, but an appreciation for fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and their worship styles. (Eph. 5:19-21)

“We expect and hope and pray that our focus on the manifesting of God is good for people and that a spirit of love for each other is not incompatible with, but necessary to, authentic worship.¹”

¹ Unless otherwise noted, quotes taken from Bethlehem Baptist Church’s philosophy of worship statement prepared by Pastor John Piper