



WORSHIP THROUGH THE ARTS

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# Foundations for Worship

## Defining Worship?

Worship is not an easy thing to define, just like love is not an easy thing to define. Perhaps one way to begin is to look at one of the most common Hebrew words in the Old Testament translated as “worship.” The word is shachah.<sup>1</sup> If you said, “That man is shachah-ing” I would hear “that man is bowing down.” When the Hebrew Scriptures said that someone worshipped, it meant that they were laying in the dirt with their face to the ground. Metaphorically speaking, worship is laying down your life before your Creator, bowing down to God.

## The Gospel is About Worship

We have to go a bit further than this basic definition, however. We live in the age of a new covenant – Jesus was miraculously born of a virgin, lived a perfect and sinless life, taught with great authority and power, healed countless people, and ultimately gave himself up to be tortured and executed on a Roman cross. We have every reason to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead three days later. Did this all happen because God thought it would be a nice story, and hey, we’d get to have holidays?

It has actually been God’s plan from the very beginning to send us a Savior. We need Jesus. Why? Because ‘sin’ is not just another word for human shortcomings and mistakes that we can overcome. Sin is a kind of sickness, deeply rooted us as descendants of Adam who beat us to the punch in disobeying God first. Sin brought death into the world. Sin is personal *and* universal -- it causes decay in God’s creation, strained human relationships, war and oppression, murder, theft, and adultery. Sin is ultimately the cause and effect of being spiritually severed from God.<sup>2</sup>

In the beginning, we were created for God’s glory – and so we can’t help but worship. But in our present state, we worship wrongly. We long to behold, be moved, admire, praise, love and glorify. But we gladly glorify other people and the things we’ve made instead of the One who made us. God’s mission in sending His Son was to reverse the curse -- to bring us back to Himself. He did this so that we would “praise His glorious grace.” In other words, God saved us for worship!<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.eattheword.com/downloadables/WordStudy.pdf> for a full list of ‘worship words’ in the Bible

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 1:7-10, Romans 5:12-14, Romans 8:19-21, Titus 3:3, Ecclesiastes 4:1, Ephesians 2:12-19

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 3:13, Romans 1:18-25, Ephesians 1:4-6

## The Triune God of Redemption

Ever since sin's grand entrance into the world, God has been actively weaving a story of redemption into human history. God appeared to a wandering pagan, Abram, and promised Him a miraculous son whose children would bless the world. The great 'I AM' rescued Israel from an oppressive nation, Egypt, and then gave them a law to follow so that they might honor and reflect His name in the midst of the nations and their false gods. Faithful Jewish leaders called God's people to repent of sin, receive His salvation, and walk according to His good and gracious plan for their lives.

Time and time again we see redemption in the Old Testament -- God enters into real life situations, God saves, God makes promises, and people worship Him in response. Consider how the stories might have gone down. Abraham realizes the way of truth by meditating in the desert for 30 years and then wanders around teaching people and doing strange things (like... Buddha?). Moses is a great man who saves his fellow Hebrews and then teaches them to worship one God instead of the many Egyptian gods (Muhammad anyone?). These are not the stories we have in the Bible, however.

From these stories we see that no one can 'find God' – God must find us. Salvation does not belong to man, but to the Lord.<sup>4</sup> We can't approach God on our own. We don't worship Him on our own terms. We can't have the seemingly innocent but irreverent approach toward God so prevalent in our culture: "I like to think of God as..." The LORD revealed Himself in power through miracles so that people would fear and worship Him and ultimately know that He is the all in all. God wants to be known, and He has done everything to reveal Himself and His will for us as human beings.

In light of Jesus, this hasn't changed – we are called to worship God in response to the great story of redemption. But we don't have to wait for Him to miraculously lead us out from under the oppression of high taxes in New Jersey. God our Father has already brought our redemption very near to us through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus. And the Holy Spirit of God has been sent to dwell in us to make His truth understood in our hearts and to transform our lives by Jesus' resurrection power.

In summary, the Father planned redemption. The Son purchased it. And the Holy Spirit applies it to our lives. We respond through faith -- by trusting and believing in Christ, receiving the Holy Spirit, and walking anew in worship with our Father God. Thank God! He has done everything to give us this new redeemed life – He simply asks us to yield our lives in repentance and faith in Jesus. We receive salvation freely and fully, because God has done everything freely and fully in Christ on our behalf, for His unending glory and praise. The life of worship awaits us.

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<sup>4</sup> Psalm 3:8

## The Holy Spirit's Role

All true worship is a response to God's great, eternal plan to redeem us through the work Jesus did when He lived and died and rose again on this earth. But the Holy Spirit is the One standing beside us on the ground as we live our lives of worship. In fact, He is the one inside us giving us the power to live a life of true worship. But what does that mean?

The apostle Paul calls him "the Spirit of Christ." We are 'sealed' with Him when we first believe in the Gospel. He empowers us for ministry and gives us various gifts to use for building up the church and witnessing to the world. He communicates joy to our hearts and comforts us in the midst of suffering. His presence in us overflows in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.<sup>5</sup>

The Spirit is the person of God working within our hearts to change our sinful desires, convict us of sin, and lead us to trust in Jesus. The Spirit will guide us into all truth and reminds us of God's love. He is our Helper. The Spirit gives us a deep sense of Who we belong to – we now pray "Father!" instead of praying to a distant Deity. The Holy Spirit equips each believer with some measure of faith and some spiritual gifting.<sup>6</sup> He continues to sustain and nurture that faith and gifting as we yield to His influence in our hearts.<sup>7</sup>

We must not forsake this truth and live life blindly as if God left us alone on earth to figure things out! We can't live a life of true worship without personally experiencing the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts. We need to pray regularly for the Spirit's influence to grow in us. And as worship leaders, we need to be aware of His work in Scripture and attune our hearts to His leading as we lead the church in worship.<sup>8</sup>

## Worship and Sacrifice

It might be natural to assume that because of the Holy Spirit's work in us that there's nothing else to worry about – God will lead us, right? Follow your renewed heart. We might say "I believe in Jesus, and I have the Holy Spirit in me, so I will follow His lead and do whatever I feel led by God to do." This is true in some sense, of course, but we are warned against self-assurance and self-deception repeatedly in Scripture:

*"[Jesus said:] Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."*

*"And [Jesus] said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.'"<sup>9</sup>*

Here we see Jesus using the language of sacrifice. In the old covenant, worshippers approached

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<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 1:13, 1 Corinthians 12-13, Acts 9:26-31, Galatians 5:22-24

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Romans 12:3

<sup>7</sup> Romans 8:12-17, 8:26-28, Ephesians 4:30, 2 Timothy 1:14, Jude 1:20

<sup>8</sup> John 16:7-11, John 16:13, Romans 5:5, Romans 8:15

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 7:21, Luke 9:23; Jesus has plenty of hard words for us to hear. Please talk to me if this troubles you!

a holy God with fear and trembling, thanks and awe as they offered up precious livestock, birds, grains or produce in worshipful sacrifice to God. These offerings were not to pacify an ever-angry God who might strike otherwise, but were prescribed in part for God's people to be able to show gratitude and active trust in Him.

And yet God is holy – He is set apart, high and exalted above all things. If we were even able to look at Him as He truly is, we would be utterly undone.<sup>10</sup> We have several examples in Scripture of people being struck dead for irreverently approaching God in His holiness.<sup>11</sup> And so, certain sin offerings were '**propitiatory**' -- they temporarily appeased God's holy wrath against sin. They were also 'expiatory' in that they symbolically displayed God's removal of sin from Israel's midst.<sup>12</sup>

The old covenant did not offer a universal, wide-open invitation of relationship to the Father God who forgives freely. But in the new covenant, there is freedom in approaching God in this way. Our freedom and adoption as sons and daughters of God was purchased when the Father poured out His terrible wrath against sin at the cross. Jesus offered up Himself as a perfect, eternal sacrifice for our sake. In the aftermath of that great event, we can draw near to the throne of grace with boldness and ask for all that we need from God, who says "It is finished" and remembers our sins no more.<sup>13</sup>

Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross, one might think that the sacrificial system of the old covenant would become obsolete. You would be right! But the principle of worshipful sacrifice did not change. Jesus's entire life is an example for us of self-sacrifice. John goes so far to tell us: "Whoever says he abides in Jesus ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." The apostle Paul bookends Romans, His most thorough explanation of the Gospel, with this command:

*"I appeal to you therefore, [in light of the amazing plan of God's salvation that Paul just explained] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."<sup>14</sup>*

In the light of God's amazing grace, as we gaze upon Jesus' life of sacrifice and love, we have a true picture of the life of worship. We are freed from sin and eternally forgiven. But now you become the sacrifice in thankful worship to God.

## God of Justice

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<sup>10</sup> See 1 Tim 6:16, John 1; only the Son of God can see the Father in this way. We believe that Jesus is the One through whom we "see" God as we are meant to. He reveals the Father perfectly.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Samuel 6:6-7. But also see the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. This is not a reality only for the Old School.

<sup>12</sup> See Leviticus 16:6-10 or do a search on "scapegoat, Old Testament"

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 27:46, Hebrews 9, Hebrews 4:14-16

<sup>14</sup> See Hebrews 10, 1 John 2:4-6, Romans 12:1

In the business of leading other people, we need to wrestle with and be humbled by the question of how pure our hearts and intentions really are. Perhaps the most relevant passage for keeping a music ministry in check is found in the book of Amos:

*“I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies... Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps (guitars) I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”*<sup>15</sup>

We can have great fellowship dinners, religious meetings, worship bands. We can be really good and precise in our giving.<sup>16</sup> These things become noise in God’s ears if we are living unjustly, caring nothing for ‘the least of these’ because we are busy playing music for church, studying the Bible, and having nice clean fellowship while distancing ourselves from the broken world that Jesus came to save. It is indeed possible for us to be lured to the trap of dead, self-serving religion and not realize it.

Our Lord Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and we have His life flowing in our hearts now through the Holy Spirit. While I would never condemn modern social justice movements, we ought to look to the Bible as our all-sufficient guide to seeking justice. I believe the picture we find there is much more compelling and beautiful. Hear Job’s description of a life of justice:<sup>17</sup>

*“When the ear heard, it called me blessed,  
and when the eye saw, it approved,  
because I delivered the poor who cried for help,  
and the fatherless who had none to help him.  
The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me,  
and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.”*<sup>18</sup>

These words are part of Job’s final defense to those who believed his suffering was a consequence of some hidden sin he committed. Job was born into sin like all of us – but he was a righteous man of faith in whom God worked mightily. His faithfulness and sacrificial service to others “caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.” May God do the same work in our church, so that Jesus’s name would be glorified on the deathbed of widows, orphans, and the fatherless across New Jersey!

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<sup>15</sup> Amos 5:21-24

<sup>16</sup> Think of Jesus’ condemnation of the Pharisees – “You tithe mint and dill and cumin, but neglect the weightier parts of the law like love and justice and mercy!” cf. Luke 11:42

<sup>17</sup> Gandhi would sleep in the nude with beautiful young women to ‘test’ his resistance to temptation. Mother Theresa told dying patients that their Hindu gods would save them, though she herself believed in Jesus. Contemporary liberals and conservatives live out mercy and justice in some true ways, but neither picture completely ‘gets’ biblical justice.

<sup>18</sup> See Job chapters 29-31

As you look at Jesus's life in the Gospels, these words apply to Him more than any other. And His life is in us. Seeking Justice and Mercy are a core part of what it means to be an authentic disciple of Christ. We must turn from all of our religious and human agendas and let Him enter our lives. He will work in and through us to love people with real life deeds that adorn our loving words (and songs) of truth and hope in the Gospel.<sup>19</sup>

### Jesus is our Worship Leader

What better way to wrap up our summary of worship themes in the Bible than this --Jesus is the only true worship leader. This is implied in much of the New Testament, but the book of Hebrews brings this truth most clearly to light:

*"Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God..."<sup>20</sup>; "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."<sup>21</sup>*

Jesus is the "only mediator between God and man."<sup>22</sup> He is the only person to whom we can go for restored relationship with God. He alone leads us in a life of worship that glorifies God. He alone teaches us the truth about God, our world, and ourselves. He alone paved the path of joyful sacrifice that we now walk. We as sinful humans can only lead worship in that we point to these realities and walk in them ourselves.

So let us "lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."<sup>23</sup> And may we all lead others in doing so.

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<sup>19</sup> 1 John 3:18

<sup>20</sup> Hebrews 2:17-18

<sup>21</sup> Hebrews 2:11-12

<sup>22</sup> 1 Timothy 2:5

<sup>23</sup> Hebrews 12:1-2

## Worship Theology Follow-up

Please take some time to think through and answer each question in 2-3 sentences. This will help us understand where you are and how to help you as a disciple of Jesus; it's not intended to be a way to grade whether you are "theologically worthy" of serving in music at Jacob's Well.

1. Any issues that you are confused on? Would you add anything?
2. What was new or thought-provoking?
3. Are there any truths related to worship that you struggle with?
4. Do you think a 'theology' of worship helps us serve and lead the church? Why?

# Leading our people in worship

## The Inadequacy of Music

In light of all that we've looked at thus far, you might feel one of a few feelings:

1. I suck.
2. I can't do this.
3. Why do we even play music or sing?

I hope this is how you feel! For it is in our weakness that God's strength will arise. In order to use music for God's glory, we must first realize that it has no power by itself to lead people to true worship. Music can be powerful, yes, but it is inadequate. It can't fulfill all that God requires of true worshippers – you can hum a worship song while serving the poor, but it takes deliberate action to step out and serve. And it's often much easier for us to just sing about it.

Well-intentioned people may come up to you after a Sunday gathering and say, "The worship today (i.e. music) was really powerful." You may be tempted to instruct said person on how worship is wrapped up in all of life, not just singing. But I don't suggest discouraging them right away. Yes, being moved by music doesn't fulfill the biblical picture of worship just like feeling gushy about someone doesn't necessarily mean true love and a marriage. But being moved by God's praises is good and right and clearly taught and displayed throughout Scripture.

For our purposes, I call this kind of worship devotional in that it is focused on our hearts being devoted to God. It can include activities like prayer, singing praise, giving thanks to God, rejoicing aloud, dancing, bowing in silence, listening to God's word, or even crying out in desperation.<sup>24</sup> These are all traits of a true worshipper whose innermost heart is seeking after God – to know, love, behold, learn from and listen to Him.

We've seen that true worship leads us to become living sacrifices. But what kind of heart would lead any of us to do such a thing? Only the heart that is content, satisfied, and set on God as worthy above all created things! The apostle Paul was driven to a life of suffering and sacrifice by such a heart:

*"Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, **in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him...**"<sup>25</sup>*

King David, the 'sweet psalmist of Israel', also sought to know the LORD and walk with Him, but his devotion flowed outward into his leadership as King over Israel. Although he was not an ordained priest of Israel, David led the people in praising and giving thanks to the LORD. He also led God's people in grieving over their sins and rebellious hearts. Look at the Psalms and you will see a whole range of human emotion, from exuberant joy to meditation to feeling forsaken. Is it any wonder, since worship is bound up in all of human life?

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<sup>24</sup> We have many examples of this as Jesus passed by the crowds. e.g. Luke 9:38-40, Luke 18:35-39  
<sup>25</sup> Philippians 3:8-9

Devotional worship responds joyfully and longingly to God as He is. But leading devotional worship is not only emotional. It's edifying – it calls others toward truth and builds them up. A song may rejoice in God's steadfast love. Or it may provide a heart-rending metaphor to lead someone to rejoice in the riches of God's grace. We are not all King David or the apostle Paul, but we all have the ability to lead others in songs of hope, prayers of repentance and thanks, Gospel raps explaining the Trinity,<sup>26</sup> and so on.

In summary, music is a gift that we can use to express praise to God and build each other up in every season of life. Singing and praying does not fulfill the call to a life of sacrificial worship or pick up our crosses by itself. But as our hearts are set on God as He is, we cannot help but respond in worship to His glory and His grace. We set our hearts on Christ, and we lead others in doing so as well.

## Gathering to worship

Jacob's Well currently meets as a gathered church every Sunday of the year to worship and proclaim the Gospel. Our community is made up of people sojourning in central New Jersey's diverse cultural realities. Our church gatherings see rich and poor, doubters and skeptics, new Christians, old Christians, single people, married people, babies and teenagers, Black and White, Puerto Rican, Indian and Asian, and even British and American coming together to hear the Gospel and worship our great God in response.<sup>27</sup>

We praise God for this reality! It's a core part of our church's DNA to reflect the true reality of the Kingdom of God both in the way that we live and who we live life with. But being part of a church that calls us 'all-in' to serve, seek the mission of God, and live life in gospel community can feel overwhelming.

And so God has ordained times of refreshing to come through meeting together regularly and sharing our gifts with one another as we rejoice in Him. "Sing to the Lord, bless His name; tell of His salvation from day to day!" Gathering together was never meant to be merely a religious meeting of motions; Gospel gathering has always been the meeting together of believers to challenge and encourage each other as we sojourn in this world:

*"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day [of Christ's return] drawing near."<sup>28</sup>*

The implication is that none of us have all that we need to do it on our own. We deceive ourselves if we think we are doing fine without opening our hearts and schedules to deep Christian fellowship. Yes, it is possible for our hearts to grow dull as we slowly walk away from the living God who purchased us with precious blood. But we have a better hope. God's promise

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<sup>26</sup> Here I admonish you to search for and enjoy "Flame The Godhead" on Youtube.

<sup>27</sup> There's even more diversity than this, but you get the point.

<sup>28</sup> Hebrews 10:24-25

is that He will finish the work He began in us, and so we make it a priority to gather as a church every week to “stir each other up to love and good works.”

### God’s Work as We Gather

What we do in gathered worship is pretty simple. But what is God doing? If Jesus Christ truly is the risen and reigning Savior, what do we expect of Him as we gather? It is natural to have a human-centered view of worship gatherings -- but if we leave it at that, Gospel gathering becomes only a perpetual pep rally for Jesus. We want to see God work to bring His kingdom’s power and presence into our midst. And we will expect of God according to what we know of Him. Let’s remind ourselves of a small sample by the example of His work in the book of Acts:

Radical	Amazing	Whoa
Believers selling their possessions and sharing ‘everything in common’ (Acts 3)	3,000 souls converted at once through Peter’s preaching. And the LORD added more day by day. (Acts 2)	Paul and Silas sprung out of prison by a Divinely-ordained earthquake. (Acts 16)
At Pentecost, Jewish pilgrims to the Temple begin praising God in many languages; onlookers declare them drunk. (Acts 2)	Various bodily healings, signs and wonders done by apostles (all throughout Acts; see also Galatians 3:5)	Peter declares God’s immediate death sentence for Ananias & Sapphira for greed and lying to Holy Spirit (Acts 5)
Church devoted to breaking of bread, fellowship, and prayer. Even non-believing Jews show favor. (Acts 2)	Philip transported geographically by the Holy Spirit after being led to convert an Ethiopian political official (Acts 8)	Saul, persecutor of the church, is thrown off a horse, blinded, and becomes a Christian and an apostle for Christ. (Acts 9)

I do not mean to imply that the book of Acts is a blueprint for us to engineer in our time. But consider all of the testimony of God’s miraculous provision throughout the Old Testament. There is a clear precedent in Scripture. And so the examples of God’s glorious provision and blessing in the Bible should serve as an example for us to grow in faith and expectancy from Him for our lives today. Do we not serve the same God?

Because we as a church are a living Body of Christ in a dark place, we must pray with hope and faith for great things from our God. But what are we ultimately hoping for God to show up and do? More than anything, we want God’s glory and grace to be revealed to as many people as possible so that they would repent of sinful self-seeking and be placed on a new path of love and devotion to God and neighbor. Our deepest desire is for people to be freed from sin’s power and radically re-shaped by the Gospel to love and serve the Lord Jesus, to be rescued from hell and on a new path toward heaven.

## Revealing God in worship

Our deepest desire is that God would reveal Himself in our worship gatherings. But that does not lead us to sit around and wait silently in a room together -- we have commands and encouragements in Scripture to do certain things as a gathered church. This involves several things: Reading Scripture to the church;<sup>29</sup> *Teaching* the Word of God and admonishing people to follow Jesus;<sup>30</sup> Sharing in fellowship and the communion meal;<sup>31</sup> Praying for “all peoples” that they may be saved;<sup>32</sup> Singing to one another and to God with thanksgiving;<sup>33</sup> and Giving generously to the mission of God.<sup>34</sup>

In all of these things, one of the most important callings that our church has is to represent Christ in all of His fullness. “Let Jesus speak!” This takes some discernment and effort. Consider the three Old Testament offices that Jesus ultimately fulfills:

Prophet	Priest	King
“You religious leaders are a bunch of whitewashed tombs, unclean and unfit for God.” (Matthew 23)	“Come to me, you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11)	“You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world...” (John 18)
Many will say to me on Judgment Day, “Lord Lord...” but I will say, “Depart from me, you workers of evil” (Matt. 25)	“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23)	“The kingdom of God is at hand -- repent and believe the good news.” (Mark 1)
“So then if you do not renounce all that you have, you cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14)	“For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.” (Luke 19:10)	“... at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue confess that [He] is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11)

Churches can tend to focus on one aspect of Jesus’ character over another. In regards to music, one type of church might sing only love songs to Jesus (Priest?); others might make us feel as if we are unworthy to worship or that God is constantly angry at us sinners (Prophet?); others make worship only about revering God’s perfect attributes, or may portray God as only a distant moral Judge and Ruler (King?).

At Jacob’s Well, we want to represent Jesus as He is -- the prophet who speaks truth into our lie; the priest who sacrificed Himself for our sins and beckons us draw near to God; the King who rose from death and reigns over all, who is blessed forever and deserves all praise. For that

<sup>29</sup> 1 Timothy 4:13

<sup>30</sup> Titus 2:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Colossians 1:28,

<sup>31</sup> 1 Corinthians 11; Acts 2:42

<sup>32</sup> 1 Timothy 2:1

<sup>33</sup> Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:18-20, Hebrews 2:12, Hebrews 13:15, James 5:13

<sup>34</sup> See Philippians 4:14-20 for an example of how missional giving is seen as a worshipful offering

reason, we choose diverse songs and scriptures that reflect both the person of Jesus and the character of God as fully as possible.

We pray and confess to Him as our priest, eagerly listen to His hard words and let them break our hard hearts, and praise and adore Him as King of Kings. If we come to God as He truly is, our awe of Him will only increase.

## Missional worship

Jacob's Well is part of a larger movement of churches following Jesus' call for us to walk as His disciples and teach others to become His disciples. Our mission is to "live for the glory of God and the good of the city by extending hope through the Gospel." How does our team and Sunday worship help fulfill our mission as a church?

Tim Keller, a pastor in Manhattan, has written some very helpful material on this question of how gathered worship can reach non-believing people.<sup>35</sup> He encourages us to pursue *evangelistic worship*. In short, this means the following:

1. *Non-believers are expected to be present in Christian worship.*<sup>36</sup>
2. *Non-believers must find the praise of Christians to be comprehensible.*
3. *Non-believers can fall under conviction and be converted through comprehensible worship.*

To fulfill these three requirements, there are three things that we do as a missional church leading missional worship:

1. *We invite non-Christians to worship*
2. *We make worship comprehensible (but not necessarily comfortable) to non-believers.*
3. *We seek to lead people to trust in Jesus through our gatherings.*

Knowing the limitations of our own leadership and natural abilities, we seek to lead a diverse group of people every week to the Cross and the Empty Tomb. For this reason, we always strive to serve with humility and excellence. We must place our trust in the Holy Spirit to give us sensitivity and discernment to lead people in worship week after week as they go through diverse circumstances and come in from all walks of life.

## Seasons of Worship

We like tradition at Jacob's Well. It keeps us focused on the bigger story of God each year even as we work through different topics or sections or books of the Bible. The three seasons we observe each year are called Advent, Lent, and Holy Week.

"Advent" simply means 'coming'. This season begins on the last Sunday of November and lasts until Christmas day. During this season we retell the story of Jesus' miraculous birth, remember Israel's longing for a Messiah, and renew our hope for Jesus' future return to bring about heaven

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<sup>35</sup> Taken from Evangelistic Worship (<http://www.redeemer2.com/resources/papers/evangelisticworship.pdf>)

<sup>36</sup> See 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 for Keller's main reference for these particular points

on earth and to reign as King of Kings. We take the opportunity to breathe new life into these old songs with new arrangements and reflection on their meaning. We also write new songs as well.

“Lent” means ‘spring’ and lasts from Ash Wednesday each year until Easter. This has historically been a time to seek God through prayer, fasting, repentance, and acts of mercy to others. We began this tradition with an emphasis on seeking God in community by calling our missional communities to fast together every week leading up to Good Friday. We will continue to observe Lent as a special season to pray for God’s Kingdom work in New Jersey to move forward and seek personal renewal for our church and our individual lives.

“Holy Week” refers to the week beginning with Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter. These Sundays are set aside each year to remember Jesus’ final days of earthly ministry before being crucified and rising from death. Easter also represents another cultural opportunity for us to invite and engage with the lost, and it has been our most well-attended Sunday gathering since we planted the church. Dates for Lent and Holy week are confusing and change every year -- use your preferred search engine to find out when these will be happening and mark your calendar.

## Personality and Leadership

God has given us all a personality that sadly often becomes our self-glorifying idol (I love myself too much) or self-deprecating enemy (I hate myself too much). We believe that personality is redeemed by God to magnify Jesus through a “new self” that He creates in us. We are the same person as we were pre-conversion, but now we are alive in Christ. There is continuity (my personality, culture, etc.), and there is discontinuity (my sin, idolatry, etc). Because of this, leading worship should not become detached and lifeless (self-deprecating) or self-absorbed (self-glorifying). Leading worship should be an exercise of the whole person, redeemed by God, making music to His glory while we stand in awe of Him.

## Worship Leadership Follow-up

1. Do you feel qualified to help lead worship? Why or why not?
2. How would you articulate the “power of music”? How should we use it in the church?
3. In your experience, what are some characteristics of good worship leading?
4. Do you think that worship gatherings at Jacob’s Well are evangelistic in the way that Keller describes? In what ways can we improve?

# Ministry Rhythms

## Commitment to Character

One of the most basic requirements for being part of our ministry is an understanding of our team's need for personal purity (godliness) as we serve the church. The pure in heart "shall see God" in the life to come; but in this life, God will only use us as we purify our hearts for His purposes.<sup>37</sup> We expect a team that is full of sinful, broken people who are being put back together through daily repentance. Ultimately we envision musicians throughout central New Jersey walking with Jesus and being used by Him to reach others through their lives as well as through the music that they create.

With that said, there are two basic standards that all of us as Christians and servants of the Church should hold each other to:

- **Honesty and transparency** (not hiding struggles, confessing sin, reconciling)
- A life of worship (personal prayer, singing, playing, quiet times)

In addition to this, we expect more of those who are more heavily involved in music. Sunday band leaders are held to a higher standard than those who are joining the team for the first time. We hold each other to "gracious accountability" in the Gospel, because we want every team member to be used by God powerfully in building up other people.

## Commitment to Craft

We want to be 'all in' with our commitment to come to church gatherings fully prepared to lead emotionally, spiritually, and musically. Week after week, we seek to move people to worship using God-glorifying songs. This 'moving' of people is not meant to be manipulative, but to bring out the depth of meaning in our songs and call people to feel the right feelings and respond in appropriate ways. After all, it is not appropriate to sing "Hallelujah" in a monotone voice. Unless you are being sarcastic, of course.

Musically-speaking, we value music that is more organic and creative. But that does not mean that we have to be anti-practice. We should desire to excel at what we do with music because we have an opportunity to serve the Lord in it. If you don't prepare beforehand, you will not enjoy leading on Sunday. Most team members will serve once per month, and so we expect the following commitment:

- Two hours of listening and practice the day before practice
- Two hours of practice and review after practice and before Sunday rehearsal

These are simple guidelines focusing on two of our main goals as a ministry -- that we memorize music and create a culture of excellence and creativity. There will always be grace for musical mistakes, but that grace should encourage us to work hard to be as prepared to serve with excellence on Sundays.

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<sup>37</sup> See 2 Timothy 2:19-21

## Commitment to Mission and Community

In light of everything we have learned about worship, it should hardly be a surprise that we expect all of our team members to be 'all in' at Jacob's Well. This means a commitment to serve the church Body through our Sunday teams, obviously, but it also means being in community with other believers who are serving Jesus in New Jersey. For more information on what missional communities are all about, see the Jacob's Well website (<http://www.jacobswellnj.org>). Walking with a Jacob's Well "MC" is required for serving in a worship band at Jacob's Well.

## Commitment to 'Class'

We do not enforce a certain dress code or believe that God looks at external things like jewelry or J Crew. There are just a few principles, however, to guide us in not letting personal appearance or style get in the way of the bigger picture of worship leading:

- On Sunday mornings, it is a good idea to wear something you would wear on a casual work day.
- On special occasions we may all dress up, but coordinating our attire is important in these circumstances to prevent funky color schemes up front.
- We recommend that you wear shoes in general unless we are leading worship on the beach.
- Take a shower, put on deodorant, eat a good breakfast, and drink some coffee before showing up to help lead worship.
- Band members should never wear cool train conductor hats
- Cool indie half-sleeve tattoos are great for street cred and should be displayed proudly, not covered up. Butterflies on your lower back or Psalm 23 on your chest is less cool to display, though.

## Serving in diverse teams

At Jacob's Well we pray and hope for diversity in our church in every way – ethnically, culturally, generationally and socioeconomically. The picture we have in the New Testament of the Kingdom of God includes “every nation, tribe, and language” giving glory to Jesus.<sup>38</sup> As God and His Kingdom shape our vision for life, you and I will find that we can share more in common with a believer from the mountains of Nepal than an unbelieving neighbor across the street. (Not that we avoid the neighbor!) In Christ, we are all united by the love of God, the hope of the Gospel, and the peace of His Spirit.

Due to the Kingdom reality of God's love for diversity, as well as the reality of New Jersey's population, we take the call to reflect the reality of the Kingdom very seriously. And it should be no burden to us as we continue to take a humble posture toward others.

While we may not all understand each other and may even have difficulty at times, a commitment to serving in diverse teams is good for us all. Teams are organized each year so as to promote musical creativity and a balancing of gifts. If a certain arrangement of musicians

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<sup>38</sup> See Revelation 5:9

works really well, we may continue to schedule that band for an indefinite time. However, we will more than likely switch things up as more people are added and new teams need to be formed.

## Communication and Resources

We let everyone know about events and post team notes through an online tool called The City. You may already be 'on' the City, but need to be added to the Worship Bands group. Band members will receive an invitation and are expected to keep up with communication. In this busy world, we need you all to be e-mail and text-messaging. You love and serve your leaders by responding quickly and clearly; we will do our best to not inundate you with requests and unnecessary stuff!

All scheduling will be done through Planning Center Online (PCO). This is a great online tool and also has excellent mobile apps so you can stay on top of our scheduling.

## Ministry Rhythms Follow-up

1. Do you gravitate more toward leading worship or making music? Or do you aspire to both?
2. What do you see as areas of growth for you musically?
3. What do you see as areas of growth for you in leadership / service?
4. Give us the basics – instruments, vocal parts, how long played / sung
5. What are your musical aspirations? Just serving, pursuing a profession, part-time passion?
6. Are you able to commit to at least a year of serving in music ministry?