

A Primer on Corporate Worship — Its Purposes and Blessings

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God has designed corporate worship should be *the* high point of the Christian's life. To gather with other blood-bought sinners and to pray, sing, read, fellowship & sit under the Word *together*, as the family of Christ, should permeate the believer's heart throughout the week. With that in mind, corporate worship should bless God and it should encourage the believer. It should strengthen the flock and it should remind each individual of his need for Christ, his Head, & for the Body of Christ, his family members. In a day where everything from football games on TV, to grocery shopping on 'the day off', to the kids' basketball practices often seems to keep people from missing one of God's greatest blessings — and gifts! — to His church, this little essay is sorely needed.

1. A blessing.

God has designed corporate worship to be a blessing to the people of God! Worship should produce joy in the Christian's heart and his heart should be encouraged, edified, and uplifted as he worships together with the family of God.

2. A remembering.

Gathering together as the family of God should always center on the person and work of Jesus Christ, His gospel, and His supreme and inerrant Word of God. To meet with the other members of the flock should serve as a reminder of who God is, what Christ has done, who man is, and what the gospel produces in the lives of true believers.

3. A meeting.

Corporate worship is an assembled gathering of like-minded, Spirit-indwelt, supernaturally-regenerated believers to worship God, exalt Christ, edify the saints, and live by the power of the Spirit. To ignore corporate worship and to downplay the corporate meetings of the church (or see it as a lesser priority in one's life) is to sorely misunderstand and cheat oneself out of the blessings that God pours out upon the gathered meeting of His people.

4. A delight.

Corporate worship prepares for heaven. Heaven is infinitely sweet and delightful and so God's gift to His people is a sampling of that heavenly delight but here on earth. Corporate worship consists of the most delightful aspects of a Christian's life — hearing from God in Scripture, speaking to God in prayer, sitting under His preached Word, and giving and receiving encouragement through Christ-centered fellowship. A true believer loves these elements and cannot live without them. Corporate worship delights his soul since it provides an opportunity to indulge in what the believer loves most — Christ, His Word, prayer, and His people.

5. A haven.

The world harshly treats God's people. The sinful world system hates God's truth and God's people and all that they stand for. And yet, when believers gather with other like-minded believers,

there is a sort of haven that the Christian finds when God's people come together. Just as a haven provides a stronghold from the storm, so the corporate gathering of believers provides a safe haven from the whirling storms of life and from the evil and raging waves of Satan's temptations. To skip corporate worship is to refuse to rest in this haven. To downplay or miss worshipping with God's people is to intentionally miss one of the great protections and strongholds that God gives to His people to provide strength, energy and vigor to live the Christian life.

6. A fellowship.

In the New Testament, to fellowship is to share a commonality, a like-mindedness. To fellowship with other believers does not connote 'hanging out' with others simply. It inherently requires a like-minded sharing in Christ. To fellowship is one of the greatest blessings that God gives to the Christian and yet, sadly, it is one of the most neglected areas of spiritual growth in the lives of many professing Christians. To follow Christ is to yearn to be with God's people. To have no yearning for Christ's people means that you are not a part of the body and it means that heaven would be miserable to you. Heaven is a world of divine, glorious, ongoing fellowship. God gives fellowship so that His people can be strengthened one with another, encourage each other in Christ and in His Word, talk about life, piety, domestic holiness, and serving Christ at work. To fellowship means to talk about Christ, to grow in one's knowledge of Christ, to share what you have learned and to glean from what others have studied and learned.

7. A hospital.

Living in the world of darkness, run and governed by the god of this world, Christians often receive beatings for their faith. True Christians suffer for their faith. These come in different ways, in different forms, to different degrees, but the Scriptures declare that all genuine Christians will suffer persecution for Christ's sake. Coming to corporate worship is like coming to the hospital. Just as one receives help, aid, care, comfort, and strength in a hospital, so a bruised and broken Christian finds help, aid, care, comfort, and strength from being with God's people and hearing God's Word taught in the gathered assembly. Corporate worship serves as a sort of hospital for Christ's wounded suffering injuries from this world. The perfect care comes not from a bandage but from the glorious balm of Christ found in the Word of God which soothes any affliction that the believer may face. Triumph with strength even in the afflictions as you meet with other believers in the loving hospital of God's people.

8. A foretaste.

Christians strangely live not for the here and now but with an eye fixed immovably and joyously on the soon-coming certainty of heaven. Every Christian fixes his hope on Christ, the author and perfecter of his faith. To live in fellowship with other believers serves, in reality, as the best foretaste of heaven. Nothing in heaven is individualistic. No Christians will live and serve and enjoy heaven isolated from Christ and from His Bride. But all of heaven is corporate. The masses and multitudes of blood-bought worshipers will gather round the throne and worship Christ together as they loudly lift their voices and passionately worship the Lamb who was slain and purchased men for God! Worship God now *corporately* to prepare for corporate worship *in heaven*. May the Body of Christ here serve as a foretaste — and a sweet one! — of the gathered throng in heaven who together look to the Lamb, love the Lamb, follow the Lamb & serve the Lamb!