

Five Distinctives of Sunday Morning Worship Gatherings

When we corporately gather together on Sunday mornings, it is our endeavor for the service to be marked by the following distinctives:

1. Rejoicing in the Salvation of God

It is abundantly clear from the Scriptures that one is to approach God in worship with joyous praise (Ps 33:1-2). To be sure, a genuine believer who has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit will want to gather with other like-minded believers to corporately worship God together (Heb 10:24-25). One of the main purposes of our gathering together is to rejoice together that God has saved us “by his own purpose and grace” (2 Tim 1:9). He has given salvation to us as a free gift (Rom 5:8, 6:23; Eph 2:8-9). This is to produce joy inexpressible (1 Pet 1:8) and sincere gratitude to God for the work *He* has wrought in our lives (Ps 95:2; Col 4:2). Therefore, we make it our ambition to rejoice and remember the free gift of salvation God has freely given to us sinners whereby we may approach His throne with boldness, confidence because of the shed blood of the Spotless Lamb of God in our stead (1 John 2:1-2; Heb 9:14, 26-28; 10:12-14).

2. Reading the Word of God

We take the divine command revealed in God’s Word to “read the Word” very seriously (1 Tim 4:13). This has been a practice all throughout the history of God’s people; Moses took the book of the Law and read it (Ex 24:7), Joshua read from the same book of the Law (Josh 8:34), Shaphan the scribe read the book of the Law before Josiah (2 Kings 22:8, 10, 16), Ezra read from the book of the Law (Neh 8:3, 8, 18), and even Jesus, God Himself, stood to read from the Law in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21). This is a practice which has been mandated of all church leaders in the local church (1 Tim 4:13; 1 Thess 5:27). Moreover, the illiteracy of many churchgoers today requires that the pastor and elders make it a regular practice to read from the Bible publically when all are gathered together (Neh 8:5-6).

3. Preaching the Word of God

This is the simple result of the reading of the Word of God. It is the climax of the worship service when God’s people sit under the faithful, fearless, and accurate preaching and teaching of God’s Word. Sadly, the preaching of God’s Word is a lost

commodity in contemporary pulpits. However, God is not without a witness. We resolve to be faithful men who study the text (1 Tim 4:15-16), rightly divide the Word (2 Tim 2:15), faithfully apply the meaning (Neh 8:8), and exhort people to live Godly lives in response to the hearing of what God says in His Word (2 Tim 4:2). It is our conviction that the preaching of the Word of God is the highest form of worship humans can attain. Therefore, it is our mandate—that is, we can do no other—to make the primary aspect of our worship services the proclamation of what God has to say through the pages of Scripture (1 Tim 4:14-16; Heb 4:12).

4. Praying with Confidence in God

We unhesitatingly believe that prayer is effective (James 5:16) and that God hears our prayers (Neh 1:5-6; Ps 4:1). We also believe that we are to pray with confidence knowing that God will answer our prayers in a way that would bring Him the utmost glory (Matt 6:10; John 17:5). We are to pray for the body of Christ (Eph 1:15-16; Phil 1:7-9; Col 1:3-4), for the edification and spiritual growth of the saints (Col 1:9-12; Eph 1:17-18; Phil 1:9-11), for the gospel to spread and save souls (2 Thess 3:1-2; Col 4:3; Eph 6:19-20). It is our commitment to pray with acclamation of God's Sovereignty (Eph 3:20-21), with thanksgiving for His grace (Ps 28:7; 56:12; Rom 1:8), with dependence upon His grace and strength to enable us to live upright and Godly lives (Heb 13:5-6; Eph 5:18; Col 3:16-17).

5. Evangelizing with Trust in God

We unswervingly believe that it is God *alone* who brings lost, dead, wretched sinners to Himself for only God is able to give life to the dead (Eph 2:1-3; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 1:3-5; Rom 5:8). Therefore, we reckon that our responsibility lies in the faithful proclamation of the gospel and the urging of people to repent for salvation (Acts 2:38; 2 Cor 7:10; 1 Cor 9:16). We know that God will judge us according to our work in proclaiming the gospel to lost sinners (1 Cor 3:7-9). However, we will faithfully evangelize the lost with an utter dependence upon God to take the foolishness of the message preached to save His own whom he has redeemed from before the foundation of the world (1 Cor 1:21; Rev 13:8; 17:8; Eph 1:4; John 17:24). Our commitment to God bringing in His elect does not minimize or halt our evangelistic determination; rather, it spurs us on and encourages us all the more in understanding that God uses us as His *instruments* to take His *message* to His *people* for the bringing them to *salvation* in Jesus Christ (2 Tim 2:21; Gal 1:1).